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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Heather Elko McKibben is an associate professor in the department of political science at the University of California, Davis. She received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 2008 and held a postdoctorate position in the Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance at Princeton University before coming to Davis. Her research interests lie in the study of international cooperation and international negotiations. She is the author of State Strategies in International Bargaining: Play by the Rules or Change Them?, as well as multiple academic articles.

PREFACE

Brief textbooks are now commonplace in International Relations. This textbook was originally written not only to be smart and brief but also—in the words of Roby Harrington of W. W. Norton—to include "a clear sense of what's essential and what's not." While this book's treatment of the essential concepts and information has stood the test of time through eight editions, this Ninth Edition includes more substantial revisions.

The overall structure remains similar. Students need a brief history of international relations to understand why we study the subject and how current scholarship is informed by what has preceded it. Theoretical perspectives, and the theories they encompass, provide us with interpretative frameworks and help us understand the answer to fundamental questions about why the world works the way it does. The levels of analysis help us understand where to look for those answers. Illustrating the value of the theoretical perspectives and levels of analysis, we use them to analyze the conflict between Russia and Ukraine that began in 2014—the relevance of which is reinforced as tensions between Russia and Ukraine and Russia and the West grew in 2020 and 2021. A chapter on statecraft then helps us further understand how foreign policy decisions are made and the role of the state in the international system. Since conflict and cooperation are the foundation of international relations, a chapter is devoted to each. Then the other major issues of the day are examined from the international political economy to international and nongovernmental organizations, human rights, the environment, and human security—namely, migration, population, and health.

There is never an opportune time to revise a textbook on international relations, but 2020 and 2021 saw unanticipated challenges. The renewal of tension among the United States, Russia, and China playing out in Ukraine, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the South China Sea, and cyberspace, and their tit-for-tat sanctions on a myriad of issues have heightened an already

tumultuous global atmosphere. Severe droughts in the Sahel region of Africa, dangerous heatwaves across the globe, record-breaking wildfires in Australia and the United States, along with other natural disasters, have helped us recognize that climate change may be the existential threat of the twenty-first century. The uncertainties surrounding the controversial yet consequential 2020 U.S. presidential election made writing about the effects on international relations even more thought-provoking. And who would have imagined that 2020 would unleash a pandemic that has affected the economic, political, and social life of individuals around the world—the effects of which will only be known over time?

This fully updated edition is enhanced by the addition of new material to address these issues and others. An entire new chapter has been added to deal with issues related to the environment, including the many concepts key to understanding climate change. Material has been added on how the COVID-19 pandemic has (re-)shaped state relations not only in issues of health but on economic development, human security, and globalization. Organizational and substantive changes in Chapters 4 and 5 were made to better illustrate the role of diplomatic, economic, and military statecraft in the world today.

The rich pedagogical program of previous editions and their ancillaries have been revised based on suggestions from adopters and reviewers:

Each chapter is introduced with a new story “ripped from the headlines,” selected to help students apply the concepts discussed in the chapter to a contemporary problem. From the war that flared up between Armenia and Azerbaijan in September 2020 to Greta Thunberg and the youth movement to tackle climate change; from increasing tensions between the United States and China, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and China’s treatment of the Uighurs, to the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, these vignettes help students apply the chapter material to the central issues of the day.

The popular Global Perspectives features have been updated with new perspectives, including: international cooperation—view from Vietnam; statecraft—view from Israel; international organizations—view from Japan; human rights—view from the United States; the environment—view from Brazil; a crisis in human security—view from Africa's Sahel. This feature encourages students to consider a specific issue from the vantage point of a particular state.

End-of-chapter review materials include discussion questions and a list of key terms from the chapter to help students remember, apply, and synthesize what they have learned.

Theory in Brief boxes, In Focus boxes, and numerous maps, figures, and tables appear throughout the text to summarize key ideas.

InQuizitive, Norton's award-winning, formative, and adaptive online quizzing program, has been updated and revised to help students engage more deeply with the text, understand the core concepts of international relations, and apply them to real-world events and scenarios; the Test Bank, written by coauthor Heather Elko McKibben, is closely connected to the text and reflects the revisions to this edition.

News Analysis Activities, new to this edition, are updated every other week during the semester, encourage students to understand and analyze current events using the theories presented in the text.

Many of these changes have been made at the suggestion of expert reviewers, primarily faculty who have taught the book in the classroom. While it is impossible to act on every suggestion (not all the critics themselves agree), we have carefully studied the various recommendations and thank the reviewers for taking time to offer critiques. We thank the following reviewers for their input on this new edition: Charity Butcher, Kennesaw State University; David N. Campbell, Brigham Young University; Eunbin Chung, University of Utah; Charles Dannehl, Bradley University; Shelby Hall, Auburn University; Amy Hamblin, Contra Costa College; Michael N. Jacobs, Gordon College; Brenda Kauffman, Flagler College; Jason Keiber, Baldwin Wallace University;

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Karen Mingst would like to offer particular thanks to Heather: "This, our second edition together, posed unimaginable personal challenges, as well as the additional hardships posed by the pandemic. Yet she was able to offer fresh perspectives, clean up messy organization and awkward wording, and discuss the issues of the day. May she remember all the joys of the past as she anticipates a very different future, one which hopefully includes our collaboration."

In this edition as in the others, Karen Mingst owes special thanks to her family: "From my husband, Robert Stauffer, together in a pandemic bubble for most of 2020 and early 2021, to our daughter Ginger in California and son Brett with his wife Tara and kids, Quintin, 8 years old, and Langley, 4 years old, in Wisconsin. Each in their own way continues to provide encouragement, while questioning another book, another edition! We are thrilled that they all continue to be a large part of our life even though we remain divided by the miles."

Heather Elko McKibben would like to thank Karen for all of her work and collaboration involved in writing on this new edition: "Karen was incredibly supportive and understanding at a very difficult time in my life. She worked hard to ensure that during that time, I was not overburdened. I cannot thank her enough for her help and selfless support in that regard. And I very much enjoyed my back-and-forth of ideas with her as we tackled updating the text to address the world today. That has helped to make the book what it is."

Heather would also like to give special thanks to her husband, Scott McKibben: "Writing a book is always a team effort—not just among coauthors but also with those supporting us behind the scenes. Scott was always supportive of me and my work,

even when he thought I was crazy for taking on more. His patience and reinforcement, even as he was engaged in an arduous battle with cancer, were crucial in helping me to work through dealing with his illness while also working on this book and beyond. The memory of his unyielding support will never be lost."

We have been fortunate to have several editors from W. W. Norton who have shepherded various editions. In this edition Anna Olcott and Peter Lesser have both been instrumental, working from home during the pandemic, both taking a personal interest in making this new collaboration smooth and seamless. They have kept us on task and time while each offering their own keen eye for substantive ambiguity and awkward wording. And Anna Olcott has expertly directed the editorial process in an expeditious fashion.

In short, many talented, professional, and delightful people contributed to the making of this edition, which we feel is the best so far. And for that, we remain always grateful.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SCOTT McKIBBEN, 1978–2021

AFRICA

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ASIA

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THE MIDDLE EAST

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EUROPE

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NORTH AMERICA

*

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

*

THE WORLD

*

1

Approaches to International Relations

*

News of the spread of COVID-19 and its resulting death toll and economic effects dominated the media in 2020 and 2021. Certain regions like Manaus, Brazil (pictured here) were hit particularly hard, and others escaped the worst of the pandemic. How can the study of international relations help us understand how states and the international community reacted to the pandemic?

The 24-hour news cycle and social media flood us with reports from around the world: millions of individuals dying from a novel coronavirus in a pandemic spanning the globe; Americans in food lines; bombings and assassinations in Afghanistan; men, women, and children fleeing conflict and economic hardship from Iraq, Syria, and Africa's Sahel region; the Arctic ice sheet melting faster than anticipated; thousands in Honduras, India, and Bangladesh fleeing natural disasters; millions marching for political change in Belarus; and military killings in Myanmar. Graphic images make these events appear to be happening everywhere, and social media amplify the message.

Amid these news stories are two major debates: first, does globalization, the product of the late twentieth century, benefit states and individuals or has globalization led to unforeseen consequences, undermining wages and lowering family income? Second, is the world becoming more violent or more peaceful? In 2011, psychologist Steven Pinker, author of The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, formulated a response to the second question: "we may be living in the most peaceful era in our species' existence." A year later, Martin Dempsey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, remarked that the world is becoming "more dangerous than it has ever been."1 Who is right? Are these observers coming at the question from different theoretical positions? Are they examining different data?

Responding to the first question requires us to understand the dimensions of globalization: the growing integration of the world in terms of politics, economics, and culture. Politically, states are confronted with issues like disease, migration, and environmental degradation that governments cannot manage on their own. Economically, states' financial markets are tied together; the internationalization of production makes it more difficult for states to regulate their own economic policies and causes them to be more affected by international forces. Culturally, globalization has prompted homogenization—people enjoying the same music and television shows—and differentiation—the desire to retain local languages and local autonomy. But has globalization been a force for good or has it led to unanticipated negative side effects? The study of international relations helps us answer these critical questions.

International relations, as a subfield of political science, is the study of the interactions among the various actors that participate in international politics. It examines the behaviors of these actors as they participate individually and together in international political processes. International relations is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry using concepts and substance from political science but also history, economics, and sociology. How can international relations help us analyze the two debates? How can we begin to think theoretically about what appear to be disconnected events? How can we begin to study the foundational issues of international relations: the characteristics of human nature and the state; the relationship between the individual and society; the attributes of the international system? In this book, we will help you explore these issues.

Nongovernmental organizations and their members also participate in globalization. Here, volunteers from NGOs operating in Lebanon distribute aid to Syrian refugees in Al-Masri refugee camp in October 2014.

*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain why we study international relations theory.

Analyze how history and philosophy have been used to study international relations.

Describe the contribution of behavioralism in international relations.

Analyze how alternative approaches challenge traditional approaches to international relations.

*

Glossary

globalization

the process of increasing integration of the world in terms of economics, politics, communications, social relations, and culture; increasingly undermines traditional state sovereignty

international relations

the study of the interactions among various actors (states, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and subnational entities like bureaucracies, local governments, and individuals) that participate in international politics

Endnotes

Note 01: Steven Pinker, The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined (New York: Viking Books, 2011), p. xxi; and Martin Dempsey, quoted in Micah Zenko, "Most. Dangerous. World. Ever.," Foreign Policy, February 26, 2013. Return to reference 1

THINKING THEORETICALLY

Political scientists develop theories or frameworks both to understand the causes of events that occur in international relations and to answer the foundational questions in the field. Although there are many contending theories in international relations, some take similar perspectives while others differ in significant ways. Three of the more prominent perspectives are developed in this book: realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

In brief, realism posits that states exist in an anarchic international system; that is, there is no overarching

hierarchical authority. Each state bases its policies on an interpretation of its national interest defined in terms of power. The structure of the international system is determined by the distribution of power among states. In contrast, liberalism is rooted in several philosophical traditions that posit that human nature is basically good. Individuals form groups and, later, states. States generally cooperate and follow international norms and procedures that they have agreed to support. Constructivists, in contrast to both realists and liberals, argue that the key structures in the state system are not material but instead social and dependent on ideas. The interests of states are not fixed but rather malleable and ever-changing.

All three of these perspectives are subject to different interpretations by international relations scholars, and various theories therefore stem from each perspective. Those theories help us describe, explain, and predict. They also help us see international relations from different viewpoints. As political scientist Stephen Walt explains, "No single approach can capture all the complexity of contemporary world politics. Therefore, we are better off with a diverse array of competing ideas rather than a single theoretical orthodoxy. Competition between theories helps reveal their strengths and weaknesses and spurs subsequent refinements, while revealing flaws in conventional wisdom."2 We will explore these competing ideas, and their strengths and weaknesses, in the remainder of this book.

*

IN FOCUS

Foundational Questions of International Relations

How can human nature be characterized?

What is the relationship between the individual and society?

What are the characteristics and role of the state?

How is the international system organized?

*

Check Your Understanding

What best summarizes the main point of realism? States act in their national interest.

States usually cooperate.

The key to international relations is ideas, not material structure.

Economic competition between classes defines politics.

Endnotes

Note 02: Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” Foreign Policy 110 (Spring 1988): 30. Return to reference 2

DEVELOPING THE ANSWERS

How do political scientists assess the accuracy, relevancy, and potency of their theories? The tools they use to answer the foundational questions of their field include history, philosophy, and the scientific method.

History

Inquiry in international relations often begins with history. Without historical background, many of today’s key issues are incomprehensible. History tells us that the continual violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza is part of a dispute over territory between Arabs and Jews, a dispute that has its origins in biblical times and its modern roots in the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The decades-old rivalry between India and Pakistan dates back to the end of British colonialism when, shortly after independence, two states were formed with millions of Muslims moving to the territory of what is now Pakistan and Hindus in India. Without that historical background, we cannot debate the appropriate solution in the Arab-Israeli dispute, nor can we understand the dynamics between India and Pakistan and the contentious issue of Kashmir, a region which both India and Pakistan claim.

History has been so fundamental to the study of international relations that there was no separate international relations subfield until the early twentieth century. Before that time, especially in Europe and the United States, international relations was studied under the umbrella of diplomatic history

in most academic institutions. Having knowledge of both diplomatic history and national histories remains critical for students of international relations.

History invites its students to acquire detailed knowledge of specific events, but it also can be used to test generalizations. Having deciphered patterns from the past, students of history can begin to explain the relationships among various events. For example, having historically documented the cases when wars occur and described the patterns leading up to war, the diplomatic historian can seek explanations for the causes of war. The ancient Greek historian Thucydides (c. 460–401 BCE), in History of the Peloponnesian War, used this approach. Distinguishing between the underlying and the immediate causes of wars, Thucydides found that what made that war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power. As Athens's power increased, Sparta, Athens's greatest rival, feared losing its own power. Thus, the changing distribution of power was the underlying cause of the Peloponnesian War.3

Many scholars following in Thucydides's footsteps use history in similar ways. But those using history must be wary because it is not always clear what history teaches us. We often rely on analogies, comparing, for example, the 2003 Iraq War to the Vietnam War.4 In both cases, the United States fought a lengthy war against a little understood, often unidentifiable enemy. In both, the United States adopted the strategy of supporting state building so that the central government could continue the fight. The policy led to a quagmire in both places when American domestic support waned and the United States withdrew. Yet differences are also evident. Vietnam has a long history and a strong sense of national identity, forged by wars against both the Chinese and French. Iraq, in contrast, is a relatively new state with significant ethnic and religious divisions. In Vietnam, the goal was defense of the U.S. ally South Vietnam against the communist north, which was backed by the Soviet Union. In Iraq, the goal was first to oust Saddam Hussein, who was suspected of building weapons of mass destruction, and second to create a democratic Iraq that would eventually lead to greater stability in the region.5 Thus we cannot draw simple "lessons" from historical analogies.

And some lessons we do draw may simply reflect one's preconceived theoretical orientations.

Realists might draw the lesson from both Vietnam and Iraq that if the United States had used all of its military might—and political actors had not constrained military actions—the outcome may have been different. Liberals might conclude that the United States should never have been involved since the homeland was not directly affected and one country's ability to construct or reconstruct another state is limited.

Scholars often draw on history to help understand world politics. When the United States invaded Iraq first in the 1991 Gulf War and then in the 2003 Iraq War, some observers raised comparisons to the Vietnam War, when many Americans protested U.S. involvement. However, there were also significant differences between these events.

*

While history offers no clear-cut lessons, we often turn to history in times of crisis to glean insights. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread in 2020, we studied the 1918 Spanish flu, hoping to draw lessons.6 In both cases, states were woefully unprepared and government elites unwilling to acknowledge the magnitude of the disaster until it was well underway—politics prevailed over science. In both cases, cities locked down and then reopened too early; in both there was resistance to the requirement of wearing masks. Yet the state of knowledge about the causes of the pandemic reveals stark contrasts. In 1918, scientists did not know what they were dealing with, while in 2020, the genome of the virus was identified within weeks of its emergence, allowing scientists around the world to begin the development of a vaccine. In 2020 and 2021, cooperation among scientific communities was extensive, while in 1918 communication across the Atlantic Ocean was slow and a world war was raging. Some states did learn from the past, but it was from a more recent past. In 2002–2003, the deadly SARS epidemic infected 8,000 people in several East Asian states. The states most affected by that epidemic learned how restricting movement, imposing targeted quarantines, and having stockpiles of personal

protection equipment was able to stop transmission. In 2020, those states enjoyed the most effective response by using this historical knowledge. Historical experience matters.

Philosophy

Philosophy can also help us answer questions in international relations. Much classical philosophy focuses on the state and its leaders—the basic building blocks of international relations—as well as on methods of analysis. For example, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (c. 427–347 BCE), in The Republic, concluded that in the "perfect state," the people who should govern are those who are superior in the ways of philosophy and war. Plato called these ideal rulers "philosopher-kings."[7] Though not directly discussing international relations, Plato introduced two ideas seminal to the discipline: class analysis and dialectical reasoning, both of which were bases for Marxist analyses, in which economic class is the major divider in domestic and international politics. The Marxist viewpoint helps us explain the tension between global and local policies, whereby, for example, local-level textile workers lose their jobs to foreign competition and are replaced by high-technology industries. (Chapter 8 explores this viewpoint in more detail.)

Just as Plato's contributions to contemporary thinking were both substantive and methodological, the contributions of his student, the philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE), lay both in substance (the search for an ideal domestic political system) and in method. Analyzing 168 constitutions, Aristotle looked at the similarities and differences among states, becoming the first writer to use the comparative method of analysis. He concluded that states rise and fall largely because of internal factors—a conclusion still debated in the twenty-first century.[8]

After the classical era, many of the philosophers of relevance to international relations focused on the foundational questions of the discipline. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), in Leviathan, imagined a state of nature, a world without governmental authority or civil order, where people rule by passions, living with the constant uncertainty of their own security. To Hobbes, the life of humans is solitary, selfish,

and even brutish. Society is in a "state of nature," or anarchy. Under anarchy there is no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws or enforce law and order. Extrapolating to the international system, which also lacks such an overarching authority, states in this anarchic condition act as humans do in the state of nature. For Hobbes, the solution to the dilemma is a unitary state—a leviathan—where power is centrally and absolutely controlled.9

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) addressed the same set of questions but, having been influenced by the Enlightenment, saw a different solution. In Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men, Rousseau described the state of nature as an egocentric world, with humans' primary concern being self-preservation —not unlike Hobbes's description of the state of nature. Rousseau posed the dilemma in terms of the story of the stag and the hare. In a hunting society, each individual must keep to their assigned task so the hunters can find and trap the stag for food for the whole group. However, if a hare happens to pass nearby, an individual might well follow the hare, hoping to get their next meal quickly and caring little for how their actions will affect the group. Rousseau drew an analogy between these hunters and states. Do states follow short-term self-interest, like the hunter who follows the hare? Or do they recognize the benefits of a common interest?10 Rousseau's solution to the dilemma posed by the stag and the hare was different from Hobbes's leviathan. Rousseau's preference was for the creation of smaller communities in which the "general will" could be attained. Indeed, according to Rousseau, it is "only the general will," not a leviathan, that can "direct the forces of the state according to the purpose for which it was instituted, which is the common good."11 In Rousseau's vision, "each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."12

Still another philosophical view of the characteristics of international society was set forth by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in both Idea for a Universal History and Perpetual Peace. Kant envisioned a federation of

states as a means to achieve peace, a world order in which people are able to live without fear of war. Sovereignties would remain intact, but the new federal order would be both preferable to a "super-leviathan" and more effective and realistic than Rousseau's small communities. Kant's analysis was based on a vision of human beings that was different from that of either Rousseau or Hobbes. In his view, though people are admittedly selfish, they can learn new ways of cosmopolitanism and universalism.13

The tradition laid down by these philosophers has contributed to the development of international relations by calling attention to fundamental relationships: those between the individual and society, between individuals in society, and between societies. These philosophers had varied, often competing, visions of what these relationships were and what they ought to be (see Table 1.1). The early philosophers have led contemporary international relations scholars to the examination of the characteristics of leaders, to the recognition of the importance of the internal dimensions of the state, to the analogy of the state and nature, and to descriptions of an international community.

History and philosophy permit us to delve into foundational questions—the nature of people and the broad characteristics of the state and of international society. They allow us to speculate on the normative (or moral) elements in political life: What should be the role of the state? What ought to be the norms in international society? How might international society be structured to achieve order? When is war just? Should economic resources be redistributed? Should human rights be universalized?14 Philosophical methods may not be useful for helping us answer specific questions; they may tell us what should be done, providing the normative guide, but philosophy generally does not help us make or implement policy. Nevertheless, both history and philosophy are key tools for international relations scholars.

TABLE 1.1

Contributions of Philosophers to International Relations Theory

Plato

(c. 427–347 BCE)

Greek

Argued that the life force in humans is intelligent. Only a few people can have insight into what is good; society should submit to the authority of these philosopher-kings. Many of these ideas are developed in The Republic.

Aristotle

(384–322 BCE)

Greek

Addressed the problem of order in the individual Greek city-state. The first to use the comparative method of research, observing multiple points in time and suggesting explanations for the patterns found.

Thomas Hobbes

(1588–1679)

English

In Leviathan, described life in a state of nature as solitary, selfish, and brutish. Individuals and society can escape from the state of nature through a unitary state that wields absolute power, a leviathan.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(1712–78)

French

In Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men, described the state of nature in both national and international society. Argued that the solution to the state of nature is the social contract, whereby individuals gather in small communities where the “general will” is realized.

Immanuel Kant

(1724–1804)

German

Associated with the idealist or utopian school of thought. In Idea for a Universal History and Perpetual Peace, advocated a world federation of republics bound by the rule of law.

The Scientific Method: Behavioralism

In the 1950s, some scholars began to draw upon one understanding of the nature of humans and on history to develop a more scientific approach to the study of international relations. They built upon the philosophical assumption that humans tend to act in predictable ways. If humans act in predictable ways, might not states do the same? Are there recurrent patterns to how states behave? Are there subtle patterns to diplomatic history? Can we use those findings to predict what might happen in the future?

Behavioralism proposes that individuals, both alone and in groups, act in patterned ways. The task of the behavioral scientist is to suggest plausible hypotheses regarding those patterned actions and to systematically and empirically test those hypotheses. Using the scientific method to describe and explain human behavior, these scholars hope to predict future behavior. Many will be satisfied, however, with being able to explain patterns, because prediction in the social sciences remains an uncertain enterprise.

The Correlates of War project exemplifies the application of behavioralism. Beginning in 1963 at the University of Michigan, the political scientist J. David Singer and his historian colleague Melvin Small investigated one of the fundamental questions in international relations: Why is there war?15 Motivated by the normative philosophical concern with how peace can be achieved, the two scholars chose an empirical methodological approach. Rather than focusing on one “big” war that changed the tide of history, as Thucydides did, they sought to find patterns among many wars.

The initial task of the Correlates of War project was to collect data on international wars between 1865 and 1965 in which 1,000 or more deaths had been reported in a 12-month period. For each of the 93 wars that fit these criteria, the researchers found data on its magnitude, severity, and intensity, as well as

the frequency of war over time. This data-collection process proved a much larger task than anticipated.

Once the wars were codified, the second task was to generate specific, testable hypotheses that might explain the outbreak of war. For example, is there a relationship between the number of alliances between states and the number of wars that are fought? Is there a relationship between the number of great powers in the international system and the number of wars? Which factors are most correlated over time with the outbreak of war? What is the correlation between international system–level factors—such as the existence of international organizations—and the outbreak of war? Although answering these questions will never prove that a particular factor is the cause of war, the answers could suggest some high-level correlations that merit theoretical explanation. That is the goal of this research project and many others following in the behavioralist scientific tradition.

Another example of research in the behavioral tradition can be found in human rights literature. The question many scholars probe is why countries violate human rights treaties. Is it because states never intended to follow the provisions? Is signing treaties just cheap talk? Is it because there is no threat of direct international enforcement? Or is it because states often lack the capacity to implement new standards? Sociologist Wade M. Cole began with the idea that "noncompliance with international treaty obligations is neither willful or premeditated."16 Rather, he hypothesized, it depends on the efficiency of a state's bureaucracy. Using a large data set that tracked state empowerment and adherence to physical-integrity rights, Cole used sophisticated statistical models that confirmed his expectations. After the signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, improvements in a state's record on physical-integrity rights depended on state's bureaucratic efficiency.

Yet methodological problems occur in both projects. The Correlates of War database looks at all international wars, irrespective of the different political, military, social, and technological contexts. Can wars of the late 1800s be explained by the same factors as the wars today? Answering

that question has led subsequent researchers to expand the data set to include disputes that do not involve a full-scale war.17 The human rights study also involves major problems of measurement and definition of key variables. How can one measure concepts such as state's empowerment and state capacity? Many different indicators need to be combined. And data may not be available for all states across all the time periods studied. In each case, alternative explanations need to be investigated. Such studies are never an end in themselves, only a means to improve explanation and to provide other scholars with hypotheses that warrant further testing.

So, to return to one of the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter, can contemporary international relations be described as relatively peaceful? The data Pinker and Dempsey are examining are different. Pinker, arguing that the world was much more violent over the past centuries, includes all types of violence—murder, tribal warfare, slavery, executions, rape. He cites statistics showing that tribal warfare in earlier centuries was nine times as deadly as twentieth-century warfare and the murder rate in medieval Europe was 30 times more than it is today. While the numbers of deaths and violent acts today may be larger, they are much smaller compared to the size of the population. World Wars I and II represent spikes from what is generally a downward trend; post 1946, there has been a decline in deaths on a per capita basis in all different kinds of wars. Dempsey, a policy maker, sees a different reality. The total number of armed conflicts of all types tripled from the 1950s to the 1990s. And though most were relatively low-intensity conflicts with limited fatalities and wartime fatalities have declined dramatically—from 240 battle-related deaths per million of the world's population in 1950 to less than 10 per million in 2007—the numbers are still too high if you are responsible for the lives of others. And some academics have attacked Pinker's use of particular statistical techniques which led to the optimistic conclusions.18

Given the data-selection problem as well as other issues, there is disillusionment with behavioral approaches. Different data may lead to substantially different conclusions, just as

described above. Some critics suggest that attention to data and methods has overwhelmed the substance of behavioralists' research. Even Singer and Small admitted losing sight of the important questions in their quest to compile data and hone research methods.

Mixed Methods and Alternative Approaches

Not all important questions can be tested by empirical methods, nor can history or philosophy independently provide answers or be a useful guide. It is, in fact, troubling that actual findings may vary by choosing one method over another. Although there are few systematic comparisons, evidence suggests that in human rights research, the findings do tend to vary by method.19 Qualitative researchers in the historical and philosophical tradition, often employing case studies of a specific human rights issue over a long period, generally find progress in human rights records and that new human rights norms have emerged. In contrast, behavioral researchers, in general, find less evidence of changes in state behavior. Usually drawing on studies with large amounts of data, including data from many states over decades when available, researchers find only marginal improvements in states' human rights records. What explains these divergent findings? Differences in ways of measuring human rights violations, differences in what human rights issues and periods of time are studied, and problems with the availability of data are all responsible.

This divergence has led researchers to turn to alternative approaches. Some scholars approaching the study of international relations from the constructivist perspective have turned to discourse analysis to answer the foundational questions of international relations. To trace how ideas shape identities, constructivists analyze culture, norms, procedures, and social practices. They probe how identities are shaped and change over time. They use texts, interviews, and archival material, and they research local practices by riding public transportation and standing in lines. By using multiple sets of data, they create thick description, as found in case studies in Peter Katzenstein's edited volume The Culture of National Security. Drawing on analyses of Soviet, German, and

Japanese security policy from militarism to antimilitarism, and on Arab national identity, the authors search for security interests defined by actors who are responding to changing cultural factors. These studies show how social and cultural factors shape national security policy in ways that contradict realist or liberal expectations.20

Other scholars seek to deconstruct the basic concepts of the field, such as the state, the nation, rationality, and realism, by searching texts (or sources) for hidden meanings underneath the surface, in the subtext. Once those hidden meanings are revealed, they seek to replace the once-orderly picture with disorder, to replace the dichotomies with multiple portraits. Cynthia Weber, for example, argues that sovereignty (the independence of a state) is neither well defined nor consistently grounded. Digging below the surface of sovereignty, going beyond evaluations of the traditional philosophers, she has discovered that conceptualizations of sovereignty are constantly shifting, depending on the needs of the moment and the values of different communities. The multiple meanings of sovereignty are conditioned by time, place, and historical circumstances.21 These analyses have profound implications for the theory and practice of international relations, which are rooted in state sovereignty and accepted practices that reinforce sovereignty. They challenge conventional understandings.

Still other scholars seek to find the voices of "the others," those individuals who have been disenfranchised and marginalized in international relations or those states or regions which have been marginalized. Women are one group whose experiences have now been incorporated into conventional understandings. Cynthia Enloe's book Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics called attention to base women, diplomatic wives, textile workers, and nannies, giving them voice.22 A feminist international relations has expanded and brought in new voices and experiences.23 Others, too, have found voices, including the dalit (or untouchables) in fighting for rights in South Asia and the disabled in international forums. Still others, like children born of rape, have not found a voice.24

To make international relations truly international, voices from the Global South must also be heard. And to many, those groups, scholars, and individuals are not being heard or acknowledged. To scholars of the Global South, the ideas of globalization, state and sovereignty, war and conflict look different, depending on one's geocultural site. Their stories and their narratives must be included to really make international relations international.25

Check Your Understanding

What is the name we give to the type of inquiry that believes that individuals, both alone and in groups, act in patterned ways? historical

philosophical

behavioral

economic

Which approach to studying international relations is most likely to focus on "the other"? realist

alternative approaches

behavioral

philosophical

Glossary

normative

relating to ethical rules; in foreign policy and international affairs, standards suggesting what a policy should be

behavioralism

an approach to the study of social science and international relations that posits that individuals and units like states act in regularized ways; leads to a belief that behaviors can be described, explained, and predicted

Endnotes

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IN SUM: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE WAY AHEAD

No important question of international relations today can be answered using only one method or only one alternative approach. The first question posed in the beginning of this chapter (Does globalization benefit states and individuals or has globalization resulted in unintended negative consequences?) demands both diverse research strategies and alternative approaches. While the questioning of the effects of globalization has recently come under intense scrutiny, the issue dates back several decades—a process that historical analyses can help us understand. The idea of globalization is also rooted in philosophical texts often with a strong normative position—a clear belief that globalization is either a positive thing that should be nurtured or a negative thing that should be halted. Behavioral researchers can draw on empirical data about globalization. Some might use economic data to show that globalization has lifted millions from poverty in China and India, while others might use data from the developed world that show loss in jobs and a downward trend in wages and standard of living for some individuals. Still

others will examine the local: communities, factories, or stories of individuals, even the marginalized and those who are politically voiceless, to understand how they have been positively or negatively affected by globalization. And they may excavate the views of those in the Global South who have lived experiences with globalization that are different from those that the Global North has experienced, and who may see international relations through different eyes. Making sense about the world around us requires multiple tools and approaches (see Table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2

Tools for Studying International Relations

TOOL

METHOD

History

Examines individual or multiple cases

Philosophy

Develops rationales from core texts and analytical thinking

Behavioralism

Finds patterns in human behavior and state behavior using empirical methods, grounded in scientific method

Alternatives

Uses several methodologies; deconstructs major concepts and uses discourse analysis to build thick description; finds voices of "others"

To that end, we need to examine general historical trends for developments in the state and the international system during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This "stuff" of diplomatic history is the subject of Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is designed to help us think about perspectives that have shaped the development of international relations theories—realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Chapter 4 builds on this discussion, introducing three "levels" from which we can analyze international relations: focusing on key characteristics

of the international system, states, and individuals. Chapter 5 digs deeper into the study of the state and the tools of statecraft. The remaining chapters address important topics. Chapter 6 examines issues of war and security, Chapter 7 analyzes international cooperation and international law, Chapter 8 looks at the international political economy, and Chapter 9 examines the roles that intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play in international politics. Chapter 10 then turns to the study of human rights, Chapter 11 the environment, and Chapter 12 issues that affect human security, including population changes, migration, and health. Throughout each topic, we use the perspectives of realism, liberalism, and constructivism as lenses for analysis.

Discussion Questions

A respected family member picks up this book and sees the word theory in the first chapter. She is skeptical about the value of theory. Explain to her the utility of developing a theoretical perspective.

Suppose philosophy is your passion. How can you bring that discipline to the study of international relations? What questions can you explore?

You are a history major skilled in researching historical archives. Suggest two research projects that you might undertake to further your understanding of international relations.

How would you approach studying globalization from a multidisciplinary viewpoint?

Key Terms

behavioralism (p. 12) globalization (p. 4) international relations (p. 4) normative (p. 10)

Glossary

behavioralism

an approach to the study of social science and international relations that posits that individuals and units like states act in

regularized ways; leads to a belief that behaviors can be described, explained, and predicted

globalization

the process of increasing integration of the world in terms of economics, politics, communications, social relations, and culture; increasingly undermines traditional state sovereignty

international relations

the study of the interactions among various actors (states, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and subnational entities like bureaucracies, local governments, and individuals) that participate in international politics

normative

relating to ethical rules; in foreign policy and international affairs, standards suggesting what a policy should be

2

The Historical Context of Contemporary International Relations

*

Historical context is necessary to understand the complex politics between North Korea and South Korea—and the world. Although much of the world seeks to curb North Korean nuclear development as a first priority, many North and South Koreans wish for unification of their country. Every year, visitors place colorful ribbons on a fence in the Demilitarized Zone between the two countries to signify their desire for reunification.

It is essential that students of international relations understand the events and trends of the past. Theorists recognize that historical circumstances have shaped core concepts in the field—concepts such as the state, the nation, sovereignty, power, and balance of power. It is difficult to understand the contemporary politics of the Koreas, China, and Japan, for example, without understanding how the peoples of each present-day state remember the events of World War II.

In large part, the roots of the contemporary international system are found in Europe-centered Western civilization. Of course, great civilizations thrived in other parts of the world, too. India and China, among others, had extensive, vibrant civilizations long before the historical events covered here. We emphasize European history because in both theory and practice, contemporary international relations is rooted in the European experience. In this chapter, we begin by looking at Europe in the period immediately preceding and following the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). We then consider Europe's relationship with the rest of the world during the nineteenth century, and we conclude with an analysis of the major transitions during the twentieth and first two decades of the twenty-first centuries.

*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Analyze which historical periods have most influenced the development of international relations.

Describe the historical origins of the state.

Understand why international relations scholars use the Treaties of Westphalia as a benchmark for contemporary international relations.

Explain the historical origins of the European balance-of-power system.

Explain how the Cold War became a series of confrontations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Analyze the key events that have shaped the post–Cold War world and the first two decades of the new millennium.

*

THE EMERGENCE OF THE WESTPHALIAN SYSTEM

Most international relations theorists locate the origins of the contemporary state system in Europe in 1648, the year the Treaties of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War. These treaties marked the end of rule by religious authority in Europe and the emergence of secular authorities. With secular

authority came the principle that has provided the foundation for contemporary international relations: the notion of the territorial integrity of states—legally equal and sovereign participants in an international system.

The formulation of sovereignty—a core concept in contemporary international relations—was one of the most important intellectual developments leading to the Westphalian revolution. Much of the development of the notion is found in the writings of the French philosopher Jean Bodin (1530–96). To Bodin, sovereignty is the "absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth."1 It resides not in an individual but in a state; thus, it is perpetual. It is "the distinguishing mark of the sovereign that he cannot in any way be subject to the commands of another, for it is he who makes law for the subject, abrogates law already made, and amends obsolete law."2

Although, ideally, sovereignty is absolute, in reality, according to Bodin, it is not without limits. Leaders are limited by divine law and natural law: "All the princes on earth are subject to the laws of God and of nature." They are also limited by the type of regime—"the constitutional laws of the realm"—be it a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. And lastly, leaders are limited by covenants, contracts with promises to the people within the commonwealth, and treaties with other states, though there is no supreme arbiter in relations among states.3 Thus, Bodin provided the conceptual glue of sovereignty that would emerge with the Westphalian agreement.

The Thirty Years' War devastated Europe. The war began during the reign of the Holy Roman Empire as a religious dispute between Catholics and Protestants, ended due to mutual exhaustion and bankruptcy. Princes and mercenary armies ravaged the central European countryside, fought frequent battles, and plundered the civilian population to secure needed supplies. The treaties that ended the conflict had three key impacts on the practice of international relations.

First, the Treaties of Westphalia embraced the notion of sovereignty. With one stroke, virtually all the small states in central Europe attained sovereignty. The Holy Roman Empire

was dead. Monarchs—and not a supranational church—gained the authority to decide which version of Christianity was appropriate for their subjects. With the pope and the emperor stripped of this power, the notion of the territorial state came increasingly to be accepted as normal. Not only did the Treaties legitimize territoriality and the right of states—as the sovereign, territorially contiguous principalities came to be known—to choose their own religion, but the Treaties also established that states had the right to determine their own domestic policies, free from external pressure and with full jurisdiction in their own geographic space. The Treaties thus introduced the principle of noninterference in the affairs of other states.

Second, because the leaders of Europe's most powerful countries had seen the devastation wrought by mercenaries in war, after the Treaties of Westphalia, these countries sought to establish their own permanent national militaries. The growth of such forces led to increasingly centralized control, since the state had to collect taxes to pay for these militaries and leaders assumed absolute control over the troops. The state with a national army emerged as a powerful force—its sovereignty acknowledged and its secular base firmly established. And that state's power increased. Larger territorial units gained an advantage as armaments became more standardized and more lethal.

Europe, c. 1648

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Third, the Treaties of Westphalia established a core group of states that dominated the world until the beginning of the nineteenth century: Austria, Russia, Prussia, England, France, and the United Provinces (the Netherlands). Those in the west (England, France, and the United Provinces) experienced an economic revival under liberal capitalism. Private enterprise was encouraged. States improved their infrastructure to facilitate commerce, and great trading companies and banks emerged. That economic success occurred as those states enslaved indigenous peoples in the Americas and transported enslaved Africans to their new lands. While slavery was not

unique to the Europeans—the Greeks, some Muslim states, the Ottoman Empire, and others engaged in the practice—the European slave trade had profound and lasting economic and social effects.

Meanwhile Prussia and Russia in the east reverted to feudal practices. Serfs remained on the land, and economic development was stifled. Yet in both regions, states led by a monarch with absolute power dominated, with Louis XIV ruling in France (1643–1715), Peter the Great in Russia (1682–1725), and Frederick II in Prussia (1740–86).

The most important social theorist of the time was the Scottish economist Adam Smith (1723–90). In An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Smith argued that the notion of a market should apply to all social orders. Individuals—laborers, owners, investors, consumers—should be permitted to pursue their own interests, unfettered by all but the most modest state regulations. According to Smith, each individual acts rationally to maximize her or his own interests. With groups of individuals pursuing their interests, economic efficiency is enhanced, and more goods and services are produced and consumed. At the aggregate level, the wealth of the state and that of the international system are similarly enhanced. What makes the system work is the so-called invisible hand of the market: when individuals pursue their rational self-interests, the system (the market) operates in a way that benefits everyone.4 Smith's explication of how competing units enable market capitalism to thrive has had a profound effect on states' economic policies and political choices, which we will explore in Chapter 8. But other ideas of the period would also dramatically alter governance in subsequent centuries.

*

IN FOCUS

Key Developments after Westphalia

Concept and practice of sovereignty develops.

Centralized control of institutions to facilitate the creation and maintenance of military; military power grows.

Capitalist economic system emerges (stable expectations facilitate long-term investment).

*

Check Your Understanding

Traditionally, international relations scholars trace the origin of the modern state system to which event? the Treaties of Westphalia

the fall of the Roman Empire

the end of World War II

the Great Depression

What best summarizes Adam Smith's contribution to economic theory in the 1700s? Smith argued in favor of government regulation of the economy.

Smith believed that the Treaties of Westphalia would bring renewed economic prosperity.

Smith wanted to see European nations grant their colonies independence.

Smith was one of the first proponents of free markets and capitalism.

Glossary

Treaties of Westphalia

treaties ending the Thirty Years War in Europe in 1648; in international relations represents the beginning of state sovereignty within a territorial space

sovereignty

the authority of the state, based on recognition by other states and by nonstate actors, to govern matters within its own borders that affect its people, economy, security, and form of government

Endnotes

Note 01: Jean Bodin, Six Books on the Commonwealth, trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 25. Return to reference 1

Note 02: Bodin, Commonwealth, p. 28. Return to reference 2

Note 03: Bodin, Commonwealth, p. 28. Return to reference 3

Note 04: Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (New York: Modern Library, 1937). Return to reference 4

EUROPE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century in Europe was a turbulent time. The American Revolution (1773–85) against British rule and the French Revolution (1789) against absolutist rule ushered in the new century, followed by the Napoleonic Wars and the expansion of imperialism and colonialism to other continents. The balance of power among the European states that had stabilized the region during that time began to break down by the end of the century as key alliances solidified.

The Aftermath of Revolution: Core Principles

Two core principles emerged in the aftermath of the American and French revolutions. The first was that absolutist rule is subject to limits. In Two Treatises of Government, the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) attacked absolute power and the notion of the divine right of kings. Locke argued that the state is an institution created by rational individuals to protect both their natural rights (life, liberty, and property) and their self-interests. Individuals freely enter into this political arrangement, agreeing to establish government to ensure natural rights for all. The crux of Locke's argument is that political power ultimately rests with the people, rather than with a leader or monarch. The monarch derives legitimacy from the consent of the governed.5

The second core principle was nationalism, wherein a people comes to identify with a common past, language, customs, and territory. Individuals who share such characteristics are motivated to participate actively in the political process as a nation.6 For example, during the French Revolution, a patriotic appeal was made to the people of France to defend the French nation and its new ideals. This appeal forged an emotional link between the people and the state—the "state"

being France's territory with a government—as explained in Chapter 4.

But these principles were being contested and undermined even at the time. Locke, for example, while arguing for a transfer of political power to the people, never saw slavery as a challenge to the principle. And the idea of nationalism was preserved for some, usually the elites, while the claims of others were contested. In the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, enslaved individuals in the French colony of Santo Domingo (modern-day Haiti) rose up against the practice of racism, beginning what would become a two-century fight against slavery and racial discrimination—a struggle detailed in Chapter 10. Nevertheless, the two principles—legitimacy and nationalism—would provide the foundation for politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Napoleonic Wars

The political impact of nationalism in Europe was profound. The nineteenth century opened with war in Europe on an unprecedented scale. France's status as a revolutionary power made it an enticing target of other European states intent on stamping out the contagious idea of government by popular consent. Thus, France became embroiled in an escalating series of wars with Austria, Britain, and Prussia. Weakened and disorganized from the years of internal conflict, a Corsican artillery officer named Napoleon Bonaparte rose to leader of the French military and, eventually, to the rank of emperor of France.

The dramatic successes and failures of France's Napoleon Bonaparte illustrated both the power and the limits of nationalism, new military technology, and organization.

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Napoleon, with help from other talented officers, set about reorganizing and regularizing the French military. Making use of French national zeal, Napoleon led large, well-armed, and passionately motivated armies. By changing technology like storing war supplies in pre-positioned locations along likely

campaign routes, troops could avoid having to stop and forage for food. In combination with nationalism, that system made it possible for the French to field larger, more mobile, and more reliable armies that could employ innovative tactics unavailable to the smaller professional armies of France's rivals like Prussia. Through a series of famous battles, Napoleon's armies shattered those of "invincible" Prussia, conquering nearly the whole of Europe in a few short years.

In Spain and Russia, however, Napoleon's armies met nationalists who fought a different sort of war. Spanish fighters used intimate local knowledge to mount hit-and-run attacks on French occupying forces. These fighters also enjoyed the support of Britain, whose unrivaled mastery of the seas meant the country could lend supplies and occasional forces. When local French forces attempted to punish the Spanish into submission through looting, torture, and executions, resistance to French occupation escalated. The cost to France was high, draining away talented soldiers and cash and damaging French morale. When Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812 with an army of 422,000, the Russians retreated, destroying all available food and shelter behind them in what came to be known as a "scorched earth" policy. The French began to suffer from severe malnutrition, with the entire army slowly starving to death as it advanced to Moscow.

By the time the French army reached the Russian capital, its size had dwindled to a mere 110,000. Napoleon waited in vain for the tsar to surrender. But realizing his vulnerability, Napoleon attempted to return to France before Russia's harsh winter set in. It was already too late. By the time French troops crossed the original line of departure, Napoleon's Grande Armeé had been reduced to a mere 10,000. The emperor was finally defeated in 1815 by English and Prussian forces at the Battle of Waterloo (in present-day Belgium).

Peace at the Core of the European System

Following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and the establishment of peace by the Congress of Vienna, the five powers of Europe—Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia—known as the Concert of Europe, ushered in a period

of relative peace in the international political system. These great powers fought no major wars after the defeat of Napoleon until the Crimean War in 1854, and in that war, both Austria and Prussia remained neutral. Other local wars of brief duration were fought, and in these, too, some of the five major powers remained neutral. Meeting more than 30 times before World War I at a series of ad hoc conferences, the Concert became a club of like-minded leaders. Through these meetings, these countries legitimized both the independence of new European states and the division of Africa among the colonial powers.

The fact that peace among great powers prevailed during this time seems surprising since major economic, technological, and political changes were radically altering power relationships. All attention was focused on industrialization. Great Britain was the leader, outstripping all rivals in its output of coal, iron, and steel and the export of manufactured goods. In addition, Britain became the source of finance capital, the banker for the continent and later for the world. Industrialization spread through virtually all areas of Western Europe as the masses flocked to the cities and entrepreneurs and middlemen scrambled for economic advantage. Since the middle classes did not depend on land for wealth and power, their ability to invent, use, and improve industrial machines and processes gave them political power at the expense of the aristocratic class.

The population of Europe soared and commerce surged as transportation corridors across Europe and the globe were strengthened. Political changes were dramatic: Italy was unified in 1870; Germany was formed out of 39 different fragments in 1871; the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was divided into the Netherlands and Belgium in the 1830s; and the Ottoman Empire gradually disintegrated, leading to independence for Greece in 1829 and for Moldavia and Wallachia (Romania) in 1856. With such dramatic changes under way, what explains the absence of major war? At least three factors discouraged war.

First, Europe’s political elites were united in their fear of revolution among the masses. In fact, at the Congress of

Vienna, the Austrian diplomat Count Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859), architect of the Concert of Europe, believed that returning to the age of absolutism was the best way to manage Europe. Others envisioned grand alliances that would bring European leaders together to fight revolution by the lower classes. And in 1848, all five powers did face demands for reform from the masses. That fear of revolt from below united European leaders, making war between them less likely.

Europe, c. 1815

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Second, two of the major conflicts of interest confronting the core European states took place within, rather than between, culturally close territories: the unifications of Germany and Italy. Both German and Italian unification had powerful proponents. For example, Britain supported Italian unification, making possible Italy's annexation of Naples and Sicily. German unification was acceptable to Russia, as long as Russian interests in Poland were respected. German unification also got support from Britain's dominant middle class, which viewed a stronger Germany as a potential counterbalance to France. Thus, because the energies of Germans and Italians were concentrated on forming contiguous territorial states, and because the precise impact of the newly unified states on the European balance of power was unknown, a wider war was averted.

The third factor supporting peace in Europe was the complex and crucial phenomenon of imperialism-colonialism, wherein rivalries between European states were played out in distant places.

Imperialism and Colonialism in the European System

The discovery of the "New" World—as Europeans after 1492 called it—led to rapidly expanding communication between the Americas and Europe. The same advanced navigation technology also made contact with Asia less costly and more frequent. The first to arrive in the New World were explorers seeking discovery, riches, and personal glory; clerics seeking to convert the indigenous peoples to Christianity; and

merchants seeking raw materials and trade relations. But some traders quickly realized that the potential wealth could be magnified by transporting enslaved peoples from Africa to the New World to clear the land and develop agriculture. This led to increasing competition among European powers for territories abroad in both the Western Hemisphere and Africa. Most of the European powers became empires and, once established, claimed as sovereign territory the lands indigenous peoples occupied. These empires are the origin of the term imperialism, the annexation of distant territory (most often by force) and its inhabitants to an empire. Colonialism, which often followed or accompanied imperialism, refers to the settling of people from a home country like Spain among indigenous peoples of a distant territory like Mexico. The two terms are thus subtly different, but most scholars use them interchangeably.

This process of annexation by conquest or treaty continued for 400 years. As the technology of travel and communications improved, and as Europeans developed vaccines and cures for tropical diseases, the costs to European powers of imposing their will on indigenous people and on transporting enslaved peoples to new territories continued to drop. In some places indigenous people welcomed Europeans; in other places, indigenous people put up resistance. In most cases, Europeans overcame that resistance with very little cost or risk. They met spears with machine guns and horses with heavy artillery, deliberately targeting indigenous civilians. By the close of the nineteenth century, almost the whole of the globe was “ruled” by European states. Great Britain was the largest and most successful of the imperial powers, but even small states, such as Portugal and the Netherlands, maintained important colonies abroad.

The Industrial Revolution provided the European states with the military and economic capacity to engage in territorial expansion. Some imperial states were motivated by economic gains, seeking new external markets for manufactured goods and obtaining, in turn, raw materials to fuel their industrial growth. For others, the motivation was cultural and religious —to spread the Christian faith and the ways of White

“civilization” to the “dark” continent and beyond. For still others, the motivation was political. Since the European balance of power prevented direct confrontation in Europe, European state rivalries were played out in Africa and Asia.

In the early twentieth century, French authorities took control of Morocco. Here, a magazine suggests the popular ideal of colonialism as “civilized” nations bringing peace and prosperity to “uncivilized” Morocco.

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Many leaders within the now-unified Italy and Germany felt that to have international respect and to guarantee cheap imports of raw materials, they “needed” to annex or colonize countries in Asia or Africa. Italy attempted to conquer and colonize Ethiopia, a Christian empire in the Horn of Africa, but suffered a humiliating defeat in 1896. To mollify Germany’s imperial ambitions, during the Congress of Berlin in 1885, the major powers divided up Africa, “giving” Germany a sphere of influence in east Africa (Tanganyika), west Africa (Cameroon and Togo), and southern Africa (Southwest Africa). European imperialism seemed to provide a convenient outlet for Germany’s aspirations as a great power, without endangering the delicate balance of power within Europe itself. By the end of the nineteenth century, 85 percent of Africa was under the control of European states.

In Asia, only Japan and Siam (Thailand) were not under direct European or U.S. influence. China is an excellent example of the extent of external domination. Under the Qing dynasty, which began in the seventeenth century, China had slowly been losing political, economic, and military power for several hundred years. During the nineteenth century, British merchants began to trade with China for tea, silk, and porcelain, often paying for these products with smuggled opium. In 1842, the British defeated China in the Opium War, forcing China to cede various political and territorial rights to foreigners through a series of unequal treaties. European states and Japan were able to occupy large portions of Chinese territory, claiming to have exclusive trading rights in particular regions. Foreign powers exercised separate “spheres of

influence" in China. By 1914, Europeans had colonized four-fifths of the world, and still controlled much of it. The United States eventually became an imperial power as well, having won the 1898 Spanish-American War, pushing the Spanish out of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other small islands.

Colonialism, 1500–1960. This map shows every country that had been under European control at any point from the 1500s to the 1960s. The United States, Mexico, and most of Latin America became independent of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but much of the rest of the world remained under colonial control until after World War II.

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The process of colonial expansion led to the establishment of a "European" identity. European states enjoyed a solidarity among themselves, based on their being European, Christian, "civilized," and White. These traits differentiated an "us"—White Christian Europeans—from an "other"—the rest of the world. This identity was, in part, a return to the same kind of unity felt under the Roman Empire, a secular form of medieval Christendom, and a larger Europe as Kant and Rousseau had envisioned.

But, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, there were increasing challenges to the notion that imperialist countries could cheaply control vast stretches of distant territory containing large numbers of aggrieved or oppressed people with only a few colonial officers and administrators. Nowhere was this system more in jeopardy than in South Africa. The Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), in which British soldiers fought against Boer commandos, White descendants of Dutch immigrants to South Africa, ended up costing 230 million pounds and lasting over two years. It proved the most expensive war, by far, in British colonial history. The war was largely unpopular in Europe and led to increased tensions between Britain and Germany. Still, the five European powers had not yet fought major wars directly against each other.

Tensions, however, did gradually reemerge and become destabilizing. Germany's unification, rapid industrialization, and population growth led to an escalation of tension that

could not be assuaged in time to prevent war. In 1870, France and Germany fought a major war, in which France suffered defeat. Through a humiliating peace treaty, France was forced to surrender the long-contested provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which became part of the new Germany. The war and the simmering resentments to which it gave birth were mere harbingers of conflicts to come. In addition, the legacy of colonialism, which had served to defuse tension in Europe, laid the groundwork for enduring resentment of Europeans by many Asians and Africans. This resentment continues to complicate peace, humanitarian work, and development operations in these areas of the world today.

Balance of Power

During the nineteenth century, colonialism, the common interests of conservative European elites, and distraction over the troubled unifications of German and Italian principalities seemed to promote a long peace in Europe. But this condition of relative peace was underpinned by another factor: a balance of power. The independent European states, each with relatively equal power, feared the emergence of any predominant state (hegemon) among them. As a result, they formed alliances to counteract any potentially more powerful faction, thus creating a balance of power. The idea behind a balance of power is simple. States will hesitate to start a war with an adversary whose power to fight and win wars is relatively balanced or symmetrical, because the risk of defeat is high. When one state or coalition of states is much more powerful than its adversaries, asymmetrical war is relatively more likely (see Chapter 6).

The treaties signed after 1815 were designed not only to quell revolution from below but also to prevent the emergence of a hegemon, such as France had become under Napoleon. Britain or Russia, at least later in the century, could have assumed a dominant leadership position—Britain because of its economic capability and naval prowess, and Russia because of its relative geographic isolation and large population. However, neither sought to exert hegemonic power; the status quo was acceptable to both states.

Britain and Russia did play different roles, however, in the balance of power. Britain most often played the role of offshore balancer. For example, it intervened on behalf of the Greeks in their struggle for independence from the Turks in the late 1820s and on behalf of Turkey against Russia in the Crimean War in 1854–56, and again in the Russo-Turkish War in 1877–78. Thus, Britain ensured that power in Europe remained relatively balanced. Russia's role was as a builder of alliances. The Holy Alliance of 1815 kept Austria, Prussia, and Russia united against revolutionary France, and Russia used its claim on Poland to build a bond with Prussia. Russian interests in the Dardanelles, the strategic waterway linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, and in Constantinople (today's Istanbul) overlapped with those of Britain. Thus, these two states, located at the margins of Europe, played key roles in making the balance-of-power system work.

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the Concert of Europe frayed, beginning with the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). Alliances began to solidify as the balance-of-power system began to weaken. Germany and Austria-Hungary gained strategic mobility with the railroad, equal to that of maritime Britain. This change reduced Britain's ability to balance power on the continent. Russia, for its part, began to fall markedly behind in the industrialization race, and Russia's power diminished compared with that of France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary.

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IN FOCUS

Key Developments in Nineteenth-Century Europe

From revolutions emerge two concepts: the idea that legitimate rule requires (some) consent of the governed, and nationalism.

A system managed by the balance of power brings relative peace to Europe. Elites are united in fear of the masses, and domestic concerns are more important than foreign policy.

European imperialism in Asia and Africa helps maintain the European balance of power.

The balance of power breaks down due to imperial Germany's too-rapid growth and the increasing rigidity of alliances, resulting in World War I.

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The Breakdown: Solidification of Alliances

Whereas in most of the nineteenth century, alliances had been flexible and fluid, by the later years, alliances became more rigid. Two camps emerged: the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) in 1882 and the Dual Alliance (France and Russia) in 1893. In 1902, Britain broke from the "balancer" role, joining in a naval alliance with Japan. For the first time, a European state (Great Britain) turned to an Asian one (Japan) to thwart a European power (Russia). And, in 1904, Britain joined with France in an alliance called the Entente Cordiale.

In that same year, Russia and Japan went to war in a contest Europeans widely expected to result in a Japanese defeat. After all, the Japanese had come late to industrialization, and although Japan's naval forces looked impressive on paper, their opponents would be White Europeans. But Russia's industrial backwardness would affect it severely. Russia's lack of sufficient railroads meant it could not reinforce its forces in the Far East, leaving it to send a naval flotilla from its Baltic home ports 18,000 miles away. In May 1905, the Russian and Japanese fleets clashed. In perhaps the greatest naval defeat in history, Russia lost eight battleships, some 5,000 sailors were killed, and another 5,000 captured. The Japanese lost three torpedo boats and 116 sailors. The impact of Japan's victory would extend far beyond the defeat of Russia in the Far East. An Asian power's defeat of a White colonial power seriously compromised a core ideological foundation of colonialism—that Whites were inherently superior to nonwhites. The Russian defeat spurred Japanese expansion and severely compromised the legitimacy of the tsar, setting in motion a revolution that, after 1917, was to topple the Russian empire and replace it with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or the Soviet Union).

World War I

The final collapse of the balance-of-power system came with World War I. Germany's rapid rise in power intensified the destabilizing impact of the hardening of alliances at the turn of the twentieth century. By 1912, Germany had exceeded France and Britain in both heavy industrial output and population growth. Germany also feared Russian efforts to modernize its relatively sparse railroad network. Being "latecomers" to the core of European power and having defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), many Germans felt that Germany had not received the diplomatic recognition and status it deserved. This lack of recognition in part explains why Germany encouraged Austria-Hungary to crush Serbia following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), who was shot in Sarajevo in June 1914. Like most of Europe's leaders at the time, Germany's leaders believed war made the state and its citizens stronger, and that backing down after a humiliation would only encourage further humiliations. Besides, the outcome of a local war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia was certain to be a quick victory for Germany's most important ally.

But under the tight system of alliances, the fateful shot set off a chain reaction. What Germany had hoped would remain a local war soon escalated to a continental war, once Russia's tsar ordered mobilization of forces. And once German troops crossed into Belgium, violating British-guaranteed Belgian neutrality, that continental war escalated to a world war when Britain sided with France and Russia. The Ottoman Empire (a Turkish-centered empire extending into the Middle East from the late thirteenth century), long a rival of Russia, entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Both sides anticipated a short, decisive war, but this did not happen. Germany's Schlieffen Plan—its strategy for a decisive victory in a two-front war against Russia and France—failed almost immediately, leading to a ghastly stalemate. Between 1914 and 1918, soldiers from more than a dozen countries endured the persistent degradation of trench warfare and the horrors of poison gas.

Europe, c. 1914

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The “Great War,” as World War I came to be known, saw the introduction of aerial bombing and unrestricted submarine warfare as well. Britain’s naval blockade of Germany caused widespread suffering and deprivation for German civilians. More than 8.5 million soldiers and 1.5 million civilians lost their lives. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire were defeated. Britain and France—two of the three “victors”—were seriously weakened. Only the United States, a late entrant into the war, emerged relatively unscathed. The defeat and subsequent dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by France and Britain led to those countries’ management of core territory in the Middle East, including British control over Palestine. Previously, in 1917, under the Balfour Doctrine, Britain had pledged to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a homeland for the Jewish people, a pledge that would be honored 30 years later.

Check Your Understanding

The French people share a common geography, history, and language and thus are often considered a nation.

state.

government.

regime.

What is true about industrialization and political power in Europe in the 1800s? Farmers gained political power at the expense of factory workers.

Industrialization favored the middle classes at the expense of aristocrats.

Industrialization did not occur in such places as England and Germany.

Wealthy land owners gained influence from industrialization.

Glossary

legitimacy

the moral and legal right to rule, which is based on law, custom, heredity, or the consent of the governed

nationalism

a sense of national consciousness where people identify with a common history, language, or customs, often placing primary emphasis on one's own nation's culture and interests over those of other nations

imperialism

the policy and practice of extending the domination of one state over another through territorial conquest or economic domination

colonialism

the practice of founding, maintaining, and expanding a state's reach to territory abroad, motivated by expectation of economic gain, political agreement, or cultural supremacy

balance of power

any system in which actors (e.g., states) enjoy relatively equal power, such that no single state or coalition of states is able to dominate other actors in the system

hegemon

a dominant state that has a preponderance of power; often establishes and enforces the rules and norms in the international system

Endnotes

Note 05: John Locke, Two Treatises on Government (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Return to reference 5

Note 06: For a recent history of nationalism, see Yael Tamir, Why Nationalism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). Return to reference 6

THE INTERWAR YEARS AND WORLD WAR II

The end of World War I saw critical changes in international relations. First, three European empires were strained and

finally broke up during or near the end of World War I. With those empires went the conservative social order of Europe. In its place emerged a proliferation of nationalisms. Russia exited the war in 1917, as revolution raged within its territory. The tsar was overthrown and eventually replaced by not only a new leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, but also a new ideology—communism. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires disintegrated. Austria-Hungary was replaced by Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, part of Yugoslavia, and part of Romania. The Ottoman Empire was also reconfigured. Having gradually weakened throughout the nineteenth century, its defeat resulted in the final overthrow of the Ottomans. Arabia rose against Ottoman rule, and British forces occupied Palestine (including Jerusalem) and Baghdad. Turkey became the largest of the successor states that emerged from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

The end of the empires accelerated and intensified nationalisms. In fact, one of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points in the treaty ending World War I called for self-determination, the right of national groups to self-rule. Technological innovations in the printing industry and a mass literate audience stimulated the nationalism of these various groups. Now it was easy and cheap to publish material in the multitude of different European languages and so offer differing interpretations of history and national life.

A second critical change was that Germany emerged from World War I an even more dissatisfied power. Germany had been defeated on the battlefield but its leaders had not been honest with the German people. Many German newspapers had been predicting a major breakthrough and victory right up until the armistice of November 11, 1918, so the myth grew that the German military had been "stabbed in the back" by "liberals" (and later Jews) in Berlin. Even more devastating was the fact that the Treaty of Versailles, which formally ended the war, made the subsequent generation of Germans pay the entire economic cost of the war through reparations—$32 billion for wartime damages. As Germany printed more money to pay its reparations, Germans suffered from hyperinflation, causing widespread impoverishment of the

middle and working classes. Finally, Germany was no longer allowed to have a standing military, and French and British troops occupied its most productive industrialized region, the Ruhr Valley. Bitterness over these harsh penalties provided the climate for the emergence of conservative groups such as the National Socialist Worker's Party, or Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler. Hitler publicly dedicated himself to righting the "wrongs" imposed on the German people after World War I.

Third, enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles was given to the League of Nations, the intergovernmental organization designed to prevent future interstate wars. But the organization itself did not have the political weight, the legal instruments, or the legitimacy to carry out the task. The political weight of the League was weakened by the fact that the United States—whose president Woodrow Wilson had been the League's principal architect—itself refused to join, retreating instead to an isolationist foreign policy. Nor did Russia join, nor were any of the vanquished states of the war permitted to participate. The League's legal authority was weak, and the instruments it had for enforcing the peace, namely sanctions, proved ineffective.

Fourth, the blueprint for a peaceful international order enshrined in Wilson's Fourteen Points failed. Wilson had called for open diplomacy—"open covenants of peace, openly arrived at."7 Point three was a reaffirmation of economic liberalism, the removal of economic barriers among all the nations consenting to the peace. The League, a "general association of nations" that would ensure war never occurred again, would maintain order. But these principles were not adopted. In the words of historian E. H. Carr, "The characteristic feature of the twenty years between 1919 and 1939 was the abrupt descent from the visionary hopes of the first decade to the grim despair of the second, from a utopia which took little account of reality to a reality from which every element of utopia was rigorously excluded."8 Liberalism and its utopian and idealist elements were replaced by realism as the dominant international relations theory—a fundamentally divergent theoretical perspective (see Chapter 3).

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IN FOCUS

Key Developments in the Interwar Years

Three empires collapse: Russia by revolution, the Austro-Hungarian Empire by dismemberment, and the Ottoman Empire by external wars and internal turmoil. These collapses lead to a resurgence of nationalisms.

German dissatisfaction with the World War I settlement (Treaty of Versailles) leads to the rise of fascism in Germany. Germany finds allies in Italy and Japan.

A weak League of Nations is unable to respond to Japanese, Italian, and German aggression. Nor can it prevent or reverse widespread economic depression.

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World War II

In the view of most Europeans and many in the United States, Germany, and in particular Adolf Hitler, started World War II. But Italy and Japan also played major roles in the breakdown of interstate order in the 1930s.

In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia (Abyssinia) and occupied it the following year. The League of Nations responded to this act of aggression with sanctions, but member states refused to enforce them, dealing a blow to the League's very foundation.

In 1931, Japan staged the Mukden incident as a pretext for assaulting China and annexing Manchuria. The Japanese invasion of China was marked by horrifying barbarity against the Chinese people, including the rape, murder, and torture of Chinese civilians, and by the increasing inability of Japan's civilian government to restrain its generals in China. Japan's record in Korea was equally brutal. Japan's reputation for savagery against noncombatants in China reached its peak in the Rape of Nanking in 1937, when an estimated 300,000 were murdered. When news of the massacres and rapes reached the United States—itself already embroiled in a dispute with Japan over Japan's prior conduct in China—a diplomatic crisis ensued, the result of which was war, when Japanese forces

attacked the U.S. Seventh Fleet at Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

But Nazi Germany, the Third Reich, proved to be the greatest challenge to the nascent interstate order that followed World War I. Adolf Hitler had come to power with a promise to restore Germany's economy and national pride. To that end, he accelerated armaments production, but unable to pay for both foodstuffs and arms, he bullied the weaker new states to the east—Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania—into ruinous trade deals. As one economic historian put it: "Germany was in a position where she was arming in order to expand, and then had to expand in order to continue to arm."9 But once the other European powers realized how far behind they were, they used every diplomatic opportunity to delay confronting Germany.

The Third Reich represented more than an economic juggernaut. Fascism as practiced by Hitler effectively mobilized the masses in support of the state, exalting the nation and race above the individual. It capitalized on the idea that war and conflict were noble activities from which ultimately superior civilizations would be formed. It drew strength from the belief that the Caucasian race was superior and other groups, namely Jews, were inferior, and it mobilized the disenchanted and the economically weak on behalf of its cause. In autumn 1938, Britain agreed to let Germany occupy the westernmost region of Czechoslovakia, in the hope of averting a general war, or at least delaying war until Britain's defense preparations could be sufficiently strengthened. But this was a false hope. In spring 1939, the Third Reich annexed the remainder of Czechoslovakia, and in September 1939, after having signed a peace treaty with the Soviet Union that divided Poland between them, German forces stormed into Poland from the west while Soviet forces assaulted from the east. Hitler's real intent was to secure his eastern flank against a Soviet threat while he assaulted Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and, ultimately, France. His grand plan then called for Germany to turn east and conquer the Soviet Union. Poland was quickly overcome, but because Britain and France

had guaranteed Polish security, the invasion prompted a declaration of war: World War II had begun.

In 1940, Hitler set his plans into motion and succeeded in a series of rapid conquests, culminating in the defeat of France in May. In the late summer and fall, after being repeatedly rebuffed in its efforts to coerce Britain into neutrality, the Third Reich prepared to invade and the Battle of Britain ensued. Fought almost entirely in the air, the battle was eventually won by Britain through a combination of extreme courage, resourcefulness, and luck; and Hitler was forced to turn east with a hostile Britain at his back. In June 1941, the Third Reich undertook the most ambitious land invasion in history: Operation Barbarossa—its long-planned yet illfated invasion of the Soviet Union. This surprise attack led the Soviet Union to join sides with Britain and France.

The power of fascism—in German, Italian, and Japanese versions—led to an uneasy alliance between the communist Soviet Union and the liberal United States, Great Britain, and France, among others (the Allies). That alliance sought to check the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan), by force if necessary. Thus, during World War II, those fighting against the Axis powers acted in unison, regardless of their ideological disagreements.

At the end of the war in 1945, the Allies prevailed. Italy had already surrendered in September 1943, and the Third Reich and imperial Japan lay in ruins. In Europe, the Soviet Union paid the highest price for the Third Reich's aggression, and, with some justification, considered itself the victor in Europe, with help from the United States and Britain. In the Pacific, the United States, China, and Korea paid the highest price for Japan's aggression. With some justification, the United States considered itself the victor in the Pacific.

Two other features of World War II demand attention as well. First, the Third Reich's military invasion of Poland, the Baltic states, and the Soviet Union was followed by organized killing teams whose sole aim was the mass murder of human beings, regardless of their support for, or resistance to, the German state. Jews in particular were singled out, but Nazi policy

extended to Roma (formerly referred to as gypsies), communists, LGBTQ individuals, and Germans born with genetic defects. In Germany, Poland, the Baltic states, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, persons on target lists were forced to abandon their homes. Nazi captors forced these people to work in labor camps and then either slowly or rapidly murdered them. In East Asia, Japanese forces acted with similar cruelty against Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean noncombatants. The Japanese often tortured victims or forced them to become subjects in gruesome experiments before murdering them. In many places, women were forced into brothels, or "comfort stations," as Japanese rhetoric of the day described them. The nearly unprecedented brutality of the Axis powers against noncombatants in areas of occupation during the war led to war crimes tribunals and, ultimately, to a major new feature of international politics following the war: the Geneva Conventions of 1948 and 1949. The conventions are collectively known as international humanitarian law (IHL), which is discussed in Chapter 10.

Europe, showing alliances as of 1939

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The Germans and Japanese were not the only forces for whom race was a factor in World War II. As documented by John Dower in his book War without Mercy, U.S., British, and Australian forces fighting in the Pacific tended to view the Japanese as "apes" or "monkey men." As a result, they rarely took prisoners and were more comfortable in undertaking massive strategic air assaults on Japanese cities. In the United States in 1942, American citizens of Japanese descent were summarily deprived of their constitutional rights and interned for the duration of the war. In the Pacific theater, racism affected the conduct and strategies of armed forces on both sides.10

Second, Germany surrendered unconditionally in May 1945 and the Allies would accept no less from Japan. But Japan refused, seeking to shield Emperor Hirohito from prosecution. In response, on August 6, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and three days later, a second bomb on

Nagasaki. The new weapon, combined with a Soviet declaration of war on Japan the same day as the Nagasaki bombing, led to Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945.

The end of World War II resulted in a major redistribution of power. The victorious United States and Soviet Union emerged as the new world powers, though the USSR had been severely hurt by the war and remained economically crippled as compared to the United States. Yet what the USSR lacked in economic power, it gained from geopolitical proximity to the two places where the future of the international system would be decided: Western Europe and East Asia. The war also changed political boundaries. The Soviet Union virtually annexed the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) and portions of Austria, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania; Germany and Korea were divided; and Japan was ousted from much of Asia. Each of these changes contributed to the new international conflict: the Cold War.

Check Your Understanding

The Third Reich was another name for the Soviet Union.

the Westphalian System.

Nazi Germany.

France under Napoleon.

Glossary

League of Nations

the international organization formed at the conclusion of World War I for the purpose of preventing another war; based on collective security

Third Reich

the German state from 1933–45; a time which coincides with the rule of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Workers Party, or "Nazis"

Cold War

the era in international relations between the end of World War II and 1990, distinguished by ideological, economic, political, and military rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States

Endnotes

Note 07: Quoted in A. C. Walworth, Woodrow Wilson (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969), p. 148. Return to reference 7

Note 08: E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1939, rep. 1964), p. 224. Return to reference 8

Note 09: P. M. H. Bell, The Origins of the Second World War in Europe (New York: Longman, 1986), pp. 151–52. Return to reference 9

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THE COLD WAR

The leaders of the victors of World War II—Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill; the United States' president, Franklin Roosevelt; and the Soviet Union's premier, Joseph Stalin—planned during the war for a postwar order. Indeed, the Atlantic Charter of August 14, 1941, called for collaboration on economic issues and prepared for a permanent system of security in a "united nations." These plans were consolidated between 1943 and 1945. The final conference in Potsdam, concluded weeks before the war officially ended, divided Germany into zones. This division, along with several other outcomes of World War II, help explain the emergence of what we now call the Cold War.

Origins of the Cold War

The first and most important outcome of World War II was the emergence of two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—as the primary actors in the international system. The second outcome of the war was the intensification over time of fundamental incompatibilities between these two

superpowers in both national interests and ideology. Differences surfaced immediately over geopolitical national interests. Having been invaded from the west on several occasions, including during World War II, the USSR used its newfound power to solidify its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, specifically in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. The Soviet leadership believed that ensuring friendly (or at least weak) neighbors on its western borders was vital to the country's national interests. In the United States, there raged a debate between those favoring an aggressive rollback strategy—pushing the USSR back to its own borders—and those favoring a less aggressive containment strategy. The diplomat and historian George Kennan published in Foreign Affairs the famous "X" telegram, in which he argued that because the Soviet Union would always feel military insecurity, it would conduct an aggressive foreign policy. Containing the Soviets, Kennan wrote, should therefore become the cornerstone of the United States' postwar foreign policy.11 What Kennan meant was that the United States should devise policies that restrained the power of that hostile nation, keeping it under control, but not necessarily using military force.

The United States put the notion of containment into action in the Truman Doctrine of 1947. Justifying material support in Greece against the communists, President Harry Truman asserted, "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way."12 Containment as policy—essentially, the use of espionage, economic pressure, and forward-deployed military resources—emerged from a comparative asymmetry of forces in Europe. After the Third Reich's surrender, U.S. and British forces rapidly demobilized and went home, whereas the Soviet army did not. In 1948, the Soviets blocked western transportation corridors to Berlin, the German capital—which had been divided into sectors by postwar agreement. The United States then realized that even as the sole state in possession of atomic weapons, it did not possess the power to coerce the Soviet Union into retreating to

its pre–World War II borders. And, in August 1949, the Soviets successfully tested their first atomic bomb. Thus, containment, based on U.S. geostrategic interests and a growing recognition that attempting rollback would likely lead to war, became the fundamental doctrine of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

The United States and the Soviet Union also had major ideological differences. The United States' democratic liberalism was based on the ideals of a social system that accepted the worth and value of the individual; a political system that depended on the participation of individuals in the electoral process; and an economic system, capitalism, that provided opportunities to individuals to pursue what was economically rational with minimal government interference. At the international level, this translated into support for other democratic regimes and for liberal capitalist institutions and processes, including, most critically, free trade.

Soviet communist ideology also influenced the USSR's conception of the international system and state practices. The failure of the Revolutions of 1848 cast Marxist theory into crisis; Marxism insisted that peasants and workers would spontaneously rise up and overthrow their capitalist masters, but this had not happened. The crisis in Marxist theory was partly resolved by Vladimir Lenin's "vanguard of the proletariat" amendment, in which Lenin argued that the masses must be led or "sparked" by intellectuals who fully understand socialism. But the end result was a system in which any hope of achieving communism—a utopian vision in which the state withered away along with poverty, war, sexism, and the like—had to be led from the top down. This result meant that to the United States and its liberal allies, the Soviet system looked like a dictatorship, bent on aggressively exporting that system under the guise of worldwide socialist revolution. Popular sovereignty vanished in every state allied to the Soviet Union (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland). For their part, Soviet leaders felt themselves surrounded by a hostile capitalist camp and argued that the Soviet Union "must not weaken but must in every way

strengthen its state … if that country does not want to be smashed by the capitalist environment."13

These "bottom up" versus "top down" differences between the United States and Russia were exacerbated by mutual misperceptions. Once each side became distrustful, it tended to view the other side's policies as necessarily threatening. For example, the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 became a contentious worldwide issue. NATO's twelve founding members sought to defend Western Europe from the fully mobilized Soviet Army, while from the Soviet perspective, NATO seemed clearly an aggressive military alliance aimed at depriving the USSR of the fruits of its victory over the Third Reich. In 1955, Russia formed its own postwar alliance—the Warsaw Pact—together with six Eastern European states. When the USSR reacted in ways it took to be defensive, Britain and the United States interpreted these actions as dangerous escalations.

The third outcome of the end of World War II was the collapse of the colonial system, a development few foresaw. The defeat of Japan and Germany meant the immediate end of their respective empires. The other colonial powers, faced with the reality of their economically and politically weakened position, and confronted with newly powerful indigenous movements for independence, were spurred by the United Nations Charter's endorsement of the principle of national self-determination. These movements were equipped with leftover small arms from World War II, led by talented commanders employing indirect defense strategies such as "revolutionary" guerrilla warfare, and inspired by the ideals of nationalism. Victorious powers were forced—by local resistance, their own decline, or pressure from the United States—to grant independence to their former colonies. This started with Britain, which granted India independence in 1947. It took the military defeat of France in Indochina in the early 1950s to bring decolonization to that part of the world. African states, too, became independent between 1957 and 1963.

Europe during the Cold War

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The fourth outcome was the realization that the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States would be played out indirectly, on third-party stages, rather than through direct confrontation. Both rivals came to believe that the risks of a direct military confrontation were too great and that the "loss" of any potential ally, no matter how poor or distant, might begin a cumulative process leading to a significant shift in the balance of power. Thus, the Cold War resulted in the globalization of conflict to all continents.

Other parts of the world developed new ideologies or recast the dominant discourse of Europe in ways that addressed their own experiences. The globalization of post–World War II politics thus meant the rise of new contenders for power. Although the United States and the Soviet Union retained their dominant positions, new ideas acted as powerful magnets for populations in independent and developing states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—the new so-called Third World. The Non-Aligned Movement, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Africanism, and Third World socialism developed as reactions to the dominant U.S.-Soviet Union confrontation.

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IN FOCUS

Key Developments in the Cold War

Two superpowers emerge—the United States and the Soviet Union. They are divided by national interests, ideologies, and mutual misperceptions. These divisions are projected into different geographic areas.

A series of crises occur—Berlin blockade (1948–49), Korean War (1950–53), Cuban missile crisis (1962), Vietnam War (1965–73), and Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan (1979–89).

A long peace between superpower rivals is sustained by mutual deterrence.

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The Cold War as a Series of Confrontations

We can characterize the Cold War (1945–89) as 45 years of overall high-level tension and competition between the superpowers but with no direct military conflict. The advent of nuclear weapons created a stalemate in which each side acted, at times reluctantly, with increasing caution. As nuclear technology advanced, both sides realized that a nuclear war would likely result in the destruction of each power beyond hope of recovery. This state of affairs was called "mutual assured destruction"—aptly underlined by its acronym: MAD. Though each superpower tended to back down from particular confrontations—either because its national interest was not sufficiently strong to risk a nuclear confrontation, or because its ideological resolve wavered in light of military realities—several confrontations very nearly escalated to war.

Most Cold War conflicts were between proxies (North Korea versus South Korea, North Vietnam versus South Vietnam, Ethiopia versus Somalia). But there were also confrontations between two blocs of states. The non-communist bloc consisted of the NATO allies (the United States, Canada, Australia, and most of Western Europe), South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines; and the communist bloc consisted of the Warsaw Pact states (the Soviet Union with its allies in Eastern Europe), North Korea, Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, and Cuba. Over the life of the Cold War, these blocs loosened, and states sometimes took positions different from that of the dominant power, but bloc politics persisted. Table 2.1 shows a timeline of major events related to the Cold War.

One of the high-level, direct confrontations between the superpowers took place in Germany. Germany had been divided immediately after World War II into zones of occupation. The United States, France, and Great Britain administered the western portion; the Soviet Union, the eastern. Berlin, Germany's capital, was similarly divided but lay within Soviet-controlled East Germany. In 1948, the Soviet Union blocked land access to Berlin, prompting the United States and Britain to airlift supplies for 13 months. In 1949, the separate states of West and East Germany were declared. In 1961, East Germany erected the Berlin Wall around the West German portion of the city to stem the tide of East

Germans trying to leave the troubled state. U.S. president John F. Kennedy responded by visiting the city and declaring, “Ich bin ein Berliner” (improper German for the sentiment “I am a Berliner”), committing the United States to the security of the Federal Republic of Germany at any cost. Not surprisingly, the dismantling of that same wall in November 1989 became the most iconic symbol of the end of the Cold War.

TABLE 2.1

Important Events of the Cold War

1945–48

Soviet Union establishes communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

1947

Announcement of Truman Doctrine; United States proposes Marshall Plan for the rebuilding of Europe.

1948–49

Soviets blockade Berlin; United States and Allies carry out airlift.

1949

Soviets test atomic bomb, ending U.S. nuclear monopoly. Chinese communists under Mao win civil war, establish People’s Republic of China. United States and Allies establish NATO.

1950–53

Korean War.

1957

Soviets launch the satellite Sputnik, causing anxiety in the West and catalyzing superpower scientific competition.

1960–63

Congo crisis and UN action to fill power vacuum.

1962

Cuban missile crisis; nuclear war narrowly averted.

1965

United States begins large-scale intervention in Vietnam.

1967

Israel defeats Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six-Day War. Glassboro summit signals détente, loosening tensions between the superpowers.

1968

Czech government liberalization halted by Soviet invasion. Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) signed.

1972

U.S. president Nixon visits China and Soviet Union. United States and Soviet Union sign Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT I).

1973

Yom Kippur War between Israel and Arab states leads to global energy crisis.

1975

Proxy and anticolonial wars fought in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Somalia. South Vietnam falls to communist North Vietnam.

1979

United States and Soviet Union sign SALT II (but U.S. Senate fails to ratify it). Soviet Union invades Afghanistan. Shah of Iran (a major U.S. ally) is overthrown in Islamic revolution. Israel and Egypt sign a peace treaty.

1981–89

Reagan Doctrine provides basis for U.S. support of "anticommunist" forces in Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

1985

Gorbachev starts economic and political reforms in Soviet Union.

1989

Peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe replace communist governments. Berlin Wall is dismantled. Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan.

1990

Germany reunified.

1991

Resignation of Gorbachev. Soviet Union collapses.

1992–93

Russia and other former Soviet republics become independent states.

The Cold War in Asia and Latin America

China, Indochina, and especially Korea became the symbols of the Cold War in Asia. In 1946, after years of bitter and heroic fighting against the Japanese occupation, communists throughout Asia attempted to take control of their respective states following Japan's surrender. In China, the wartime alliance between the Kuomintang (non-communist Chinese nationalists) and Mao Zedong's "People's Liberation Army" dissolved into renewed civil war, in which the United States attempted to support the Kuomintang with large shipments of arms and military equipment. By 1949, however, the Kuomintang had been defeated, and its leaders fled to the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). With the addition of mainland China (one-fourth of the world's population) to the communist bloc, U.S. interests in Japan and the Philippines now seemed directly threatened.

In 1946, in what was then French Indochina (an amalgamation of the contemporary states of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam), Ho Chi Minh raised the communist flag over Hanoi, declaring Vietnam to be an independent state. The French quickly returned to take Indochina back, but they proved unable to defeat the communists, the Viet Minh. In 1954, the French were defeated in a town called Dien Bien Phu. A peace treaty was signed in Geneva that same year dividing Indochina into Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, with Vietnam being divided into two zones: North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

After having spent years seeking support from the USSR to unify the Korean peninsula under communist rule, North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung finally persuaded Joseph Stalin to lend him the military equipment needed to conquer non-communist South Korea. On June 25, 1950, communist North Korean forces crossed the frontier into South Korea and rapidly overwhelmed the South's defenders. The North Korean offensive quickly captured Seoul, South Korea's capital, and then forced the retreat of the few surviving South Korean and American armed forces to the outskirts of the southern port city of Busan. In one of the most dramatic military reversals in history, U.S. forces—fighting for the first time under the auspices of the United Nations because of North Korea's "unprovoked aggression" and violations of international law—landed a surprise force at Inchon. Within days, the U.S. forces cut off and then routed the North Korean forces. By mid-October, UN forces had captured North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, and by the end of the month, the destruction of North Korea's military was nearly complete.

Yet the war did not end. Against the wishes of U.S. president Harry Truman, U.S. general Douglas MacArthur ordered his victorious troops to finish off the defeated North Koreans, who were encamped very close to the border with communist China. The Chinese had warned they would intervene if their territory was approached too closely, and in November, they did. The relatively poorly equipped but more numerous and highly motivated Chinese soldiers attacked the UN forces, causing the longest retreat of U.S. armed forces in American history. The two sides then became mired in a stalemate. With numerous diplomatic skirmishes over the years—provoked by the basing of U.S. troops in South Korea and North Korean attempts to become a nuclear power—the peninsula remains a source of conflict today.

The 1962 Cuban missile crisis was a high-profile direct confrontation between the superpowers in another area of the world. The United States viewed the Soviet Union's installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba as a direct threat to its territory. Once the crisis became public, neither side could back down and global thermonuclear war became a very real

possibility. The United States chose to blockade Cuba—another example of containment strategy in action—to prevent the arrival of additional Soviet missiles. The U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, rejected the more aggressive actions the U.S. military favored, such as a land invasion of Cuba or air strikes on missile sites. Through behind-the-scenes, unofficial contacts in Washington and direct communication between Kennedy and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba and the United States agreed to remove similarly capable missiles from Turkey. The crisis was defused, and war was averted.

Vietnam provided a test of a different kind. Communist North Vietnam and its Chinese and Soviet allies were pitted against the "free world"—South Vietnam, allied with the United States and assorted supporters, including South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. To most U.S. policy makers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Vietnam was yet another test of the containment doctrine: communist influence must be stopped, they argued, before it spread like a chain of falling dominos through the rest of Southeast Asia and beyond (hence the term domino effect). Thus, the United States supported the South Vietnamese dictators Ngo Dinh Diem and later Nguyen Van Thieu against the rival communist regime of Ho Chi Minh in the north, which was underwritten by both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. But, as the South Vietnamese government and military faltered on their own, the United States stepped up its military support, increasing the number of its troops on the ground and escalating the air war over the north.

In the early stages, the United States was confident of victory; after all, a superpower with all its military hardware could surely beat a poorly trained Vietcong guerrilla force. American policy makers were quickly disillusioned, however, as communist forces proved adept at avoiding the massive technical firepower of U.S. forces, and a corrupt South Vietnamese leadership siphoned away many of the crucial resources needed to win its more vital struggle for popular legitimacy. As U.S. casualties mounted, with no prospects for victory in sight, the U.S. public grew disenchanted. Should the

United States fight until victory to prevent the domino from falling or should it extricate itself from this unpopular quagmire? Should the United States fight for liberalism and capitalism or capitulate to the forces of ideological communism? These questions, posed in both geostrategic and ideological terms, defined the middle years of the Cold War, from the Vietnam War's slow beginning in the late 1950s until the dramatic departure of U.S. officials from the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon, in 1975— symbolized by U.S. helicopters leaving the U.S. embassy roof while dozens of desperate Vietnamese tried to grab on to the boarding ladders and escape with them.

For the United States, Vietnam became a symbol of the Cold War rivalries in Asia. The United States supported the South Vietnamese forces against the communist regime in the north. Here, North Vietnamese soldiers stand atop a downed U.S. B-52 bomber.

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The U.S. effort to avert a communist takeover in South Vietnam failed, yet contrary to expectations, the domino effect did not occur. Cold War alliances were shaken on both sides: the friendship between the Soviet Union and China had long before degenerated into a geostrategic fight and a struggle over the proper form of communism, especially in Third World countries. But the Soviet bloc was left relatively unscathed by the Vietnam War. The U.S.-led Western alliance was seriously jeopardized, as several allies (including Canada) strongly opposed U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Confidence in military alternatives was shaken in the United States, undermining the United States' ability to commit itself militarily for more than a decade.

Was the Cold War Really Cold?

It was not always the case that when the United States or the Soviet Union acted, the other side responded. In some cases, the other side chose not to act, or at least not to respond in kind. Usually this was out of concern for escalating a conflict to a major war. For example, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, both sovereign

states and allies in the Warsaw Pact. These aggressive Soviet actions went unchecked. In 1956, the United States, preoccupied with the Suez Canal crisis, kept quiet, aware that it was ill prepared to respond militarily. In 1968, the United States was mired in Vietnam and beset by domestic turmoil and a presidential election. The Soviets likewise kept quiet when the United States took aggressive action within the U.S. sphere of influence, invading Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989. Thus, during the Cold War, even blatantly aggressive actions by one of the superpowers did not always lead to a comparable response by the other.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the reaction was different. Some states boycotted the 1980 summer Olympics scheduled for Moscow. The U.S. response went further, secretly providing money and materials to the mujahideen, Islamic guerrilla rebels defending Afghanistan. Between 1981 and 1983, that assistance amounted to about $60 million annually. By 1985, it had increased to $250 million annually. The objective was clear: push the Soviets out, an objective achieved in 1989.

Many of the events of the Cold War involved the United States and the Soviet Union only indirectly; proxies often fought in their place. Nowhere was this so true as in the Middle East. For both the United States and the Soviet Union, the Middle East was a region of vital importance because of its possession of an estimated one-third of the world's oil, its strategic position as a transportation hub between Asia and Europe, and its cultural significance as the cradle of three of the world's major religions. The establishment of Israel itself in 1948 was a controversial act. At the end of World War II, Britain had concluded that it could no longer manage Palestine, referring the issue to the United Nations. The UN recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab; the Jews accepted the proposal, and the Arabs did not. Thus, when British control terminated in 1948, Israel announced the formation of a new state, to which the United States immediately gave diplomatic recognition.

The region thus became the scene of a superpower confrontation by proxy between the U.S.-supported Israel and

the Soviet-backed Arab states of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. During the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel crushed the Soviet-equipped Arabs in six short days, seizing the strategic territories of the Golan Heights, Gaza, and the West Bank. During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which the Egyptians had planned as a limited war, the Israeli victory was not so overwhelming, because the United States and the Soviets negotiated a ceasefire before more damage could be done. But throughout the Cold War, these "hot" wars were followed by guerrilla actions supported by all parties. As long as the basic balance of power was maintained between Israel and the United States on one side and the Arabs and the Soviets on the other, the region was left alone; when that balance was threatened, the superpowers acted through proxies to maintain the balance.

Other events during this time also proved critical, though their importance was realized only later. In 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini led the Iranian Revolution, creating a Shiite theocracy eager to export its ideas. Students supporting that revolution subsequently overran the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held American citizens hostage. Over 400 days later, 52 hostages were released, but those events changed U.S.-Iran relations. And in the same year, the takeover of the Great Mosque of Mecca led Saudi Arabia to reassert Wahhabism, a puritanical form of Sunni Islam. That act would set up the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia for domination in the Islamic world. The repercussions of these events, little understood during the tensions of the Cold War, would be felt in the twenty-first century.14

In parts of the world that were of less strategic importance to the two superpowers, confrontation through proxies was even more regular during the Cold War. Africa and Latin America present many examples of such events. When the colonialist Belgians abruptly left Congo in 1960, civil war broke out as various contending factions sought to take power and bring order out of the chaos. One of the contenders, the Congolese premier Patrice Lumumba (1925–61), appealed to the Soviets for help in fighting the Western-backed insurgents and received both diplomatic support and military supplies.

However, Lumumba was dismissed by the Congolese president, Joseph Kasavubu, an ally of the United States. Still others, such as Moïse Tshombe, leader of the copper-rich Katanga province, who was also closely identified with Western interests, fought for control. The three-year civil war could have become another protracted proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, the United Nations averted such a confrontation by sending in peacekeepers, whose primary purpose was to stabilize a transition government and prevent the superpowers from making Congo yet another violent arena of the Cold War.

In Latin America, too, participants in civil wars were able to transform their struggles into Cold War confrontations by proxy, thereby gaining military equipment and technical expertise from one of the superpowers. In most cases, Latin American states were led by governments beholden to wealthy elites who maintained a virtual monopoly on the country's wealth. When popular protest against corruption and injustice escalated to violence, communist Cuba was often asked to support these armed movements, and in response, the United States tended to support the incumbent governments—even those whose record of human rights abuses against their own citizens had been well established. In Nicaragua, for example, after communists called Sandinistas captured the government from its dictator in 1979, the Ronald Reagan administration supported an insurgency known as the "Contras" in an attempt to reverse what it feared would be a "communist foothold" in Latin America. Such proxy warfare enabled the superpowers to project power and support geostrategic interests and ideologies without directly confronting one another and risking major or thermonuclear war.

In sum, the Cold War was really only relatively cold in Europe, and very warm, or even hot, in other places. In Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, over 40 million people lost their lives in superpower proxy wars from 1946 to 1990.

But the Cold War was also "fought" and moderated in words, at summits (meetings between leaders), and in treaties. Some Cold War summits were relatively successful: the 1967

Glassboro summit between U.S. and Soviet leaders began the loosening of tensions known as détente. Others, however, did not produce results. Treaties between the two parties placed self-imposed limitations on nuclear arms. For example, the first Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT I), in 1972, placed an absolute ceiling on the numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed nuclear warheads, and multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs); and limited the number of antiballistic missile sites each superpower maintained. So the superpowers did enjoy periods of accommodation, when they could agree on principles and policies.

Check Your Understanding

What is correct about colonies during the Cold War? The vast majority of colonial lands gained independence during the Cold War.

The United States and the Soviet Union competed to claim new colonies in Africa and Asia.

British and French colonial holdings sided with the United States, whereas German and Italian colonial lands sided with the Soviet Union.

Colonies had to wait until after the end of the Cold War to gain independence.

Glossary

superpowers

highest-power states as distinguished from other great powers; term coined during the Cold War to refer to the United States and the Soviet Union

rollback

a strategy of using, or threatening the use of, armed force to aggressively coerce an adversary into abandoning occupied territory

containment

a foreign policy designed to prevent the expansion of an adversary by blocking its opportunities to expand through

foreign aid programs or through use of coercive force; the major U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era

capitalism

the economic system in which the ownership of the means of production is in private hands; the system operates according to market forces whereby capital and labor move freely

socialism

an economic and social system that relies on intensive government intervention or public ownership of the means of production in order to distribute wealth among the population more equitably; in radical Marxist theory, the stage between capitalism and communism

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

military and political alliance between Western European states and the United States established in 1948 for the purpose of defending Europe from aggression by the Soviet Union and its allies; post–Cold War expansion to Eastern Europe

Warsaw Pact

the military alliance formed by the states of the Soviet bloc in 1955 in response to the rearmament of West Germany and its inclusion in NATO; permitted the stationing of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe

domino effect

a metaphor that posits that the loss of influence over one state to an adversary will necessarily lead to a subsequent loss of control over neighboring states, just as dominos fall one after another

summits

talks and meetings among the highest-level government officials from different countries

détente

the easing of tense relations; in the context of this volume, détente refers to the relaxation and reappraisal of threat assessments by political rivals, for example, the United States and Soviet Union during the later years of the Cold War

Endnotes

Note 11: George F. Kennan ["X"], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Foreign Affairs 25 (July 1947): 566–82. Return to reference 11

Note 12: Quoted in Charles W. Kegley Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, World Politics: Trend and Transformation, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), p. 94. Return to reference 12

Note 13: Joseph Stalin, "Reply to Comrades," Pravda, August 2, 1950. Return to reference 13

Note 14: See Kim Ghattas, Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Forty-Year Rivalry That Unraveled Culture, Religion, and Collective Memory in the Middle East (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2020). Return to reference 14

THE IMMEDIATE POST–COLD WAR ERA

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolized the end of the Cold War, but its actual end was gradual. The Soviet premier at the time, Mikhail Gorbachev, and other Soviet reformers had set in motion two domestic processes—glasnost (political openness) and perestroika (economic restructuring)—as early as the mid-1980s. Glasnost, combined with a new technology—the videocassette player—made it possible for the first time since the October Revolution for average Soviet citizens to compare their living standards with those of their Western counterparts. The comparison proved dramatically unfavorable. It also opened the door to criticism of the political system, culminating in the emergence of a multiparty system and the massive reorientation of the once-monopolistic Communist Party. Perestroika undermined the foundation of the planned economy, an essential part of the communist system. At the outset, Gorbachev and his reformers sought to save the system, but once initiated, these reforms led to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Gorbachev's resignation in

December 1991, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself in 1992–93.

Gorbachev's domestic reforms also led to changes in the orientation of Soviet foreign policy. Needing to extricate the country from the political quagmire and economic drain of the Soviet war in Afghanistan while seeking to save face, Gorbachev suggested that the permanent members of the UN Security Council "could become guarantors of regional security."15 Afghanistan was a test case, in which a small group of UN observers monitored and verified the withdrawal of more than 100,000 Soviet troops in 1988 and 1989—an action that would have been impossible during the height of the Cold War. Similarly, the Soviets agreed to and supported the 1988 withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. The Soviet Union had retreated from international commitments near its borders, as well as others farther abroad. Most important, the Soviets agreed to cooperate in multilateral activities to preserve regional security.

The first post–Cold War test of the so-called new world order came in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait in August 1990. Despite its long-standing support for Iraq, the Soviet Union (and later Russia), along with the four other permanent members of the UN Security Council, agreed first to implement economic sanctions against Iraq. Then they agreed in a Security Council resolution to support the means to restore the status quo—to oust Iraq from Kuwait with a multinational military force. Finally, they supported sending the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission to monitor the zone and permitted the UN to undertake humanitarian intervention and create safe havens for the Kurdish and Shiite populations of Iraq. Although forging a consensus on each of these actions was difficult, the coalition held—a unity unthinkable during the Cold War.

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IN FOCUS

Key Developments in the Immediate Post–Cold War Era

Changes are made in Soviet/Russian foreign policy, with the withdrawals from Afghanistan and Angola in the late 1980s, monitored by the United Nations.

Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the multilateral response unite the former Cold War adversaries.

Glasnost and perestroika continue in Russia, as reorganized in 1992–93.

The former Yugoslavia disintegrates into independent states; civil war ensues in Bosnia and Kosovo, leading to UN and NATO intervention.

Widespread ethnic conflict arises in central and western Africa, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESExplaining the End of the Cold War: A View from the Former Soviet Union

Many scholars of American diplomatic history attribute the end of the Cold War to policies the United States initiated: the buildup of a formidable military capable of winning either a nuclear or conventional war against the Soviet Union and the development of the strongest, most diversified economy the world has ever known. However, those within the Soviet Union perceived the events leading to the end of the Cold War differently.

The predominant viewpoint in the former Soviet Union is that the explanation for the end of the Cold War can be found in a very long and complex chain of domestic developments in the Soviet Union itself. Political, economic, and demographic factors led to what seemed to be an abrupt disintegration of the Soviet Union and hence the end of the Cold War. International relations theorists did not predict it; perhaps they were not looking at domestic factors within the Soviet state itself and did not have a sufficiently long historical perspective.

The political dominance and authority of the Communist Party, the main ideological pillar of the Soviet Union, had significantly eroded by the late 1980s. The revelation of

Joseph Stalin's horrific crimes against the Soviet people, especially ethnic minorities, intensified animosity in the far-flung parts of the Soviet empire. Many of the smaller republics and subnational regions bore a grudge against the central government for forced Russification, the resettlement of certain minorities, and other atrocities such as induced famines in Russia and Ukraine in the early 1930s. Increasingly open discussion of such events undermined the ideological fervor of the common population and shook their trust in the "people's government."

During the 1960s, some Soviet leaders saw stagnation in the economic, technological, and agricultural spheres. Internal critics of the regime blamed the top-level political leadership, which had become ossified. The policy of lifelong appointments to leading posts, a policy that remained in effect until the mid-1980s, meant that political appointees stayed in their posts for 20 or more years, regardless of their performance. There were few efforts to reform and modernize the system, and younger people had little opportunity to exercise political leadership. These failures in leadership, exemplified by the poor economy, led to widespread discontent and resentment in all layers of the society.

Moreover, the Soviet Union was a very ethnically diverse state, consisting of 15 major republics, some of which also contained "autonomous" republics and regions, inhabited by hundreds of ethnicities. Although the Soviet Union had benefited economically from extracting resources found in the far reaches of its territories, the costs of keeping the empire together were high. Subsidies flowed to the outer regions at the expense of the Soviet state. With growing economic discontent and the erosion of the ideology promoted by the Communist Party, local nationalist movements started to fill the ideological vacuum by the late 1980s.

Before the mid-1980s, the inherent distortions and inefficiencies of the Soviet planned economy were partially offset by the profits from the energy sector based on oil and gas exports. However, the Soviet industrial and agricultural sectors lagged behind, inefficient and uncompetitive. Technological development stagnated, too. The sharp decline

in world oil prices in the 1980s compounded the problems. The resulting rationing of basic food products and the poor quality of domestically manufactured products totally discredited the socialist economic model and added to the general discontent. The declining state budget could no longer bear the burden of the arms race with the United States, finance an expensive war in Afghanistan, and keep the increasingly fractured empire within its orbit.

The interplay of all these factors came to a climax when Mikhail Gorbachev took power in 1985. Acknowledging the urgent need for change, he launched ambitious domestic reforms collectively referred to as perestroika, literally "restructuring" of economic relations, including stepping back from central planning and curbing government subsidies. Glasnost was the political component, an "opening" that relaxed censorship and encouraged democratization. In foreign policy, "New Thinking" meant improving relations with the United States and the possibility of the coexistence of the capitalist and socialist systems through shared human values. The underlying reasons for most of these domestic changes were economic. Reducing military expenditures and gaining access to Western loans became critical for the survival of the troubled state.

Mikhail Gorbachev addresses the Russian parliament in 1991.

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The rapid dissolution of the Eastern bloc led to a dramatic shift in the balance of power in the international system. Rising nationalist movements and local liberal forces gained momentum and won significant representation in the local parliaments after the first competitive elections in the former Socialist republics. Eventually, Russia became one of the first to declare independence and affirm sovereignty, with the rest of the republics following suit in the "sovereignty parade" in 1991. The de facto dissolution of the Soviet Union marked an important chapter in the history of the Cold War, but given events in Russia and Ukraine—especially Russia's 2014 annexation by force of Crimea—we cannot yet say that the collapse of the Soviet Union is the Cold War's final chapter.

FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

How can we balance the traditional view that Western economic and military dominance caused a Soviet "defeat" with the Soviet view that internal weaknesses and contradictions were primarily to blame?

Glasnost was supposed to make it possible for Soviet citizens to share information, but it also made it possible for them to compare their own lives with those beyond the USSR. How might this development have affected the legitimacy of the Communist Party?

If states "learn" from their own mistakes and achievements as well as those of other states, what might a state like China have learned from the collapse of the USSR?

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The 1990s were marked by the struggle of former allies and enemies to find new identities and interests in a more complex world. As the threat of World War III vanished, what was the purpose of an organization such as NATO? What role might armed forces specialized to win interstate wars play in substate violence? The world witnessed increasing ethnic tension and violence in central Africa, namely Rwanda and Burundi, and in Yugoslavia.

The ethnic conflict leading to the disintegration of Yugoslavia played itself out over the entire decade, despite Western attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully. That conflict culminated in an American-led war against Serbia to halt attacks on the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo. The 78-day air war by NATO against Serbia ended with the capitulation of the Serbs and international administration of the province of Kosovo. The repercussions of that war on issues of sovereignty and protection of human rights affect international politics to this day.

Clearly, the end of the Cold War in the 1990s and the overwhelming military power of the United States, combined with its economic power, appeared to many to usher in an era of U.S. primacy in international affairs. Yet that primacy proved insufficient to deter or prevent ethnic conflict, civil

wars, and human rights abuses from occurring, whether in Somalia, Rwanda, or the former Yugoslavia. And many threats, like terrorism, cyberattacks, and the global financial crisis of 2008, have demanded multilateral engagement: no single state, however powerful, can remain secure against these threats on its own.

Check Your Understanding

What was the first major international crisis after the end of the Cold War? China invading India

terrorist attacks against the United States

civil war in South Africa spreading to neighboring states

Iraq invading Kuwait

As NATO struggled to redefine its mission in the wake of the end of the Cold War, it involved itself heavily in a civil war in which European country? France

Egypt

Yugoslavia

Iceland

Endnotes

Note 15: Mikhail Gorbachev, "Reality and Guarantees for a Secure World," as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, Soviet Union, September 17, 1987, p. 25. Return to reference 15

THE NEW MILLENNIUM: THE FIRST TWO DECADES

Several features of international politics have characterized the first two decades of the twenty-first century—the emergence of terrorism as a key national security issue, the Arab Spring and civil conflicts that followed, multiple financial crises, competition among great powers, the growth of populism and a backlash against globalization, and a global pandemic which aggravated many of these other problems.

The Emergence of Terrorism and the World's Reaction

One of the most significant changes in interstate politics following the end of the Cold War has been the emergence of terrorism—once a relatively minor threat—from a law-enforcement problem to a vital national security interest for many states. On September 11, 2001, the world witnessed lethal, psychologically disorienting, and economically devastating terrorist attacks directed by Osama bin Laden and organized and funded by Al Qaeda against New York City and Washington, DC. Buoyed by an outpouring of international support and by the first-ever invocation of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Charter, which declares an attack on one NATO member to be an attack on all, the United States undertook to lead an ad hoc coalition to combat terrorist organizations with global reach. The new war on terror involved multiple campaigns in different countries and began in October 2001 when the United States launched a war in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime, which was providing safe haven to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization.

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IN FOCUS

Key Developments in the First Two Decades of the New Millennium

Al Qaeda commits terrorist acts against the homeland of the United States and U.S. interests abroad; U.S. and coalition forces respond militarily in Afghanistan and Iraq. Terrorist attacks occur in Saudi Arabia, Spain, Great Britain, Nigeria, France, and Belgium, among other countries.

The financial crisis in the United States in 2008 devastates its economy and rapidly spreads to other countries. The euro debt crisis in Europe and the subsequent vote by Great Britain to leave the European Union threaten the viability of that arrangement.

In the Arab Spring beginning in 2011, Tunisia becomes the first in a series of Arab countries in which a popular uprising topples a long-established dictator. The uprisings are not all successful and lead to civil wars. Amid violence in Syria and

Iraq, the Islamic State declares a worldwide caliphate in 2014, laying claim to territory with 10 million inhabitants. By 2019, the IS was in retreat.

Competition among the great powers intensifies. In 2014, presumed Russian soldiers begin occupying eastern Ukraine and Crimea. While Crimea votes overwhelmingly to rejoin Russia, Russian-backed troops fight for control of eastern Ukraine. China's military budget expands. China asserts territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea; China continues suppression of the Uighurs and undermines freedoms in Hong Kong. China-U.S. trade war escalates. Tit-for-tat diplomacy between United States and China and the United States and Russia grows.

Economic stagnation, growing inequality, and migrant surges lead to nationalist and populist governments. In Russia and China, nationalist rhetoric grows. In the United States, many European countries, the Philippines, and Brazil, there is resurgent populism, a rejection of traditional elites, a turn to authoritarian leaders, and a rejection of international cooperation and globalization. The COVID-19 pandemic re-energizes the debate over the future of globalization.

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By the end of 2001, NATO had overthrown the Taliban, paving the way for a friendlier Afghan government. However, the Taliban regrouped in neighboring Pakistan and led an insurgency against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul. After almost two decades of war and nine rounds of negotiations, the United States and the Taliban signed a peace agreement in 2020, calling for a ceasefire and a withdrawal of foreign forces, but the agreement did not hold. In 2021, as ethnic conflict and tribal differences persisted, the Biden administration announced its intention to withdraw military forces from the country.

Iraq was also the target of the U.S. war on terror. Following the initially successful campaign in Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, which targeted terrorists and led to elections, the United States broke from its allies. Convinced that Iraq maintained weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the United States built a

coalition, including its key ally Great Britain. This coalition destroyed the Iraqi military and overthrew Iraq's government in 2003, and Hussein himself was executed in 2006. But when no weapons of mass destruction were found, additional justifications for the invasion were offered, including promoting democracy. Iraq remains torn by sectarian conflict, and its U.S.-trained armed forces have suffered setbacks since the United States withdrew most of its troops in 2011.

The civil strife in Iraq, combined with the civil conflict that developed in Syria following the Arab Spring (discussed below), gave rise to the growth of another terrorist organization: the Islamic State (IS), sometimes called ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) or ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant). In 2014, the IS declared itself to be a worldwide caliphate—an area under the leadership of an Islamic steward who is considered to be leader of the entire Muslim community. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was declared its caliph. At its pinnacle of power in 2016, the IS laid claim to territory containing more than 10 million people in Iraq and Syria, relying on brutality and religious conservatism to subdue its Sunni subjects and systematically destroying cultural heritage sites. A coalition of Western states led by the United States, along with Turkey, systematically fought back, liberating territory held by the IS in Iraq. In 2017, the coalition, together with the Syrian Democratic Forces, also succeeded in liberating territory in Syria, including the city of Raqqa, the IS's proclaimed "capital." In 2019, the IS caliphate was in shambles, its remaining 12,000 fighters being detained by Kurdish forces.

However, terrorist acts inspired by IS supporters continue to wreak havoc across Europe from Paris nightclubs to the streets of Nice, Brussels, Stockholm, Manchester, and London, and even in Iran and the Sahel region of Africa. Thus, as its territory has shrunk, the violence perpetrated by its supporters and those inspired by the IS has escalated. There is concern that the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 distracted governments, opening an opportunity for terrorist groups including the IS to begin a resurgence. The problem of terrorism is clearly not over.

Financial Crises

In the early years of the new millennium, easy access to credit combined with insufficient equity requirements ushered in a decade of risky borrowing. In 2008, a crisis broke out in the U.S. housing market—one of the key locations of risky investment. Banks lost billions; millions lost their homes. The U.S. economy was devastated, and the problem spread to Europe and eventually to the developing world. Global stock markets plummeted; one of the world's largest banks collapsed; both industrial output and world trade levels dropped far more than they had in 1929; global foreign direct investment and flows of remittances from migrant workers plunged. The global financial system was in crisis.

As growth within the states in the EU began to slow or reverse because of the 2008 crisis, a crisis closer to home was magnified, leading to the Eurozone crisis of 2009. Within the Eurozone, Germany's imports soared while the southern members' exports were uncompetitive. Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, and Cyprus struggled to repay or refinance their government debt and their people suffered through the economic distress. Germany and other northern-tier states in the Eurozone paid the bailout costs. In 2020, COVID-19 generated a new financial crisis, an economic downturn not seen since the Great Depression. After arduous negotiations, members of the European Union agreed to a $750 billion coronavirus recovery fund, disbursed in grants to countries most affected by the economic downturn.

The Arab Spring and Civil Conflicts

In the new millennium, civil conflicts have wreaked havoc across the globe. Countries from Yemen to Ethiopia, from Libya to Myanmar, have been mired in conflict. The conflicts have caused major refugee flows, bringing crisis to neighboring states as well.

Some of the most famous civil conflicts stemmed from the Arab Spring. In December 2010, a local protest by a single man in Tunisia sparked a massive social protest against the cruelty and corruption of Tunisia's long-standing dictator, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. Although Ben Ali fled to exile, protests

against corrupt and brutal Arab leaders did not stop. Soon popular protests broke out in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and later Syria. Egypt's leader, Hosni Mubarak, faced massive protests and he was forced to step down. Libya's dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, was forced from power by a rebellion supported by France and the United States. He was captured and later murdered by his captors. In other parts of the Middle East, Arab rulers made what some saw as concessions. In 2011, when Syrians began to protest against their government, the Bashar al-Assad regime released jihadists from prison. Thus, the Arab Spring refuted claims of radical and militant Islamists such as Al Qaeda that only through Islamic revolution, terror attacks on "the West," and the reestablishment of strict Islamic law could Arab dictators be overthrown. The Arab Spring gave the world hope that young people armed with mobile phones, courage, and conviction could change entrenched regimes.

But the outcomes of these mass uprisings were neither uniform nor anticipated. In Bahrain, protest was brutally suppressed. And in Egypt, the fall of Mubarak was followed by the election of Mohamed Morsi, then his ouster by the Egyptian military, with a quasi-democratic government following. In Syria, the release of the violent jihadists served as a pretense for the Assad regime to lash out against protesters, unleashing a violent civil war.

Syria has evolved into a complex situation involving both states and nonstate actors in various overlapping coalitions. The Assad regime is supported by both Russia and Iran; Russia and Iran oppose the IS and moderate rebels fighting the Syrian government. The United States supports Syrian Kurds, the moderate rebels, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, but opposes the IS, the Assad regime, and Iran. Turkey supports the moderate rebels, Saudi Arabia, and its Gulf allies, but opposes Assad, the IS, Iran, and the Syrian Kurds. At one point, both the United States and Russia were flying combat air missions over Syria supporting their various allies, leading to the possibility of a direct military engagement. More than a decade later, the conflict continues.

Rising Great Power Competition

Great power competition has intensified in several arenas over the last 20 years. U.S. and Russian hostilities are occurring not only in Syria but in Ukraine as well. In 2014, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine—an independent sovereign state—and then annexed the Ukrainian province of Crimea. The action was undertaken not by Russian Federation soldiers in national uniforms but by soldiers wearing uniforms without insignia. This tactic enabled both the Russian government and NATO and EU representatives to support the argument that no violation of international law had actually taken place, although outside Russia, no credible authorities believe this assertion. What is perhaps most dangerous about Russia's foreign policy in Ukraine is the precedent the action has set. In a move reminiscent of Germany's claims about Sudeten Germans in 1938, Russia argued that its citizens in Crimea and Ukraine were being physically threatened after the legitimate government of Ukraine had fallen in a coup. NATO members Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are concerned that Russia might use similar tactics to bring down their governments. Russia's buildup of military forces on the Ukrainian border in 2021 reinforced this suspicion.

Great power confrontations have also blossomed in East Asia. The United States and North Korea have each taken provocative actions. North Korea has developed and tested nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles, which by 2017 were rumored to be capable of reaching U.S. territory. After that 2017 test, President Trump threatened North Korea with "fire and fury like the world has never seen."16 Then abruptly the two leaders met in two high-profile summits. North Korea, however, refused to dismantle its nuclear program and the United States refused to drop sanctions. The stalemate evocative of the Cold War continued.

The major story in the years following 2020 may be the U.S.-China relationship, complicated by a wide range of issues: defense posture and military expenditures, trade, technology, media, diplomacy, and even COVID-19. In 2003, China began to frame its growing use of economic, military, and diplomatic power as "China's peaceful rise," designed to affirm its benign

intentions and not seek global hegemony. But many individuals, especially those in the United States, did not see it that way. China had begun to expand its military expenditures, making it the world's second-largest military spender, behind only the United States. The rise of Xi Jinping to general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012 and to the presidency in 2013 had domestic and international consequences. Xi boosted party control over Chinese society and began to enhance China's influence globally.

In 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative, a regional infrastructure project engaging over 80 countries in efforts designed to enhance Chinese economic and political influence. In 2014, China began the practice of dredging large quantities of sand in the disputed waters of the South China Sea, challenging Southeast Asian country claims, and asserted claims in the East China Sea, countering Japanese claims. China harasses ships and aircraft traversing the region, and the United States continues flyovers to assert rights in the Pacific theater. Since 2018, the United States and China have squared off in a trade war over a range of issues including control of technology. In 2020, diplomatic relations soured even more as China crushed Hong Kong's democratic movement and the United States responded with sanctions. Then the United States unilaterally closed China's consular office in Houston and the Chinese responded by closing the American office in Chengdu. The belief in the United States that COVID-19 spread directly from China into the United States has only exacerbated tensions between the two countries, leading experts to wonder: Is there a new Cold War?17

The Rise of Populism and Backlash against Globalization

Economic and political globalization, once the prominent features of international relations since the end of the Cold War, has spawned nationalist and populist reactions. There is a resurgence of nationalism in Russia, Turkey, Hungary, and China, among others.18 Chinese nationalism, for example, is an appeal to domestic audiences, emphasizing a national pride in the collective achievements and sacrifices of the Chinese people. The suppression of the ethnic minority Uighurs and the clampdown in Hong Kong reaffirming the One-China

policy are manifestations of the nationalist appeal. That appeal helped deflect from shortcomings of the regime evident in the spread of COVID-19, while bolstering the success of the state in other areas.19

Populism—an appeal to those angry about the decline of traditional values, suspicious of elites, mainstream politics, and established institutions—has also emerged as a reaction to globalization.20 The various financial crises have only contributed to these concerns. Populism has arisen from, and contributed to, a backlash against international cooperation and globalization. Europeans and Americans have realized that the economic gains from globalization have not been evenly distributed, that wages have stagnated, and that living standards have fallen. They blame the "other"—elites within their own country, other states' unfair policies, migrants, and refugees; the response has been protectionism and isolationism. The vote in Great Britain in 2016 in favor of leaving the European Union was one of the first concrete indicators of this populist rebellion, and the election of President Donald Trump later that year was another.

In 2020, amid the rise of nationalism and populism, the COVID-19 pandemic escalated the debate over the future of globalization. After all, it was the movement of people, products, and services which accelerated a novel virus that emerged in one Chinese city to a pandemic gripping the world. The shortages of personal protective equipment and chemical reagents for COVID-19 tests caused by the rupture of global supply chains between China and the West brought home to many that economic globalization made some states vulnerable. This led some commentators to conclude that COVID-19 will spark the end of globalization as we know it.21 We will explore all these trends in subsequent chapters.

Check Your Understanding

One of the most significant changes in the post-Cold War era, in terms of international relations at least, has been the emergence of which transnational issue? terrorism

climate change

cybercrime

usage of landmines

Glossary

war on terror

declaring to use a given society's material and nonmaterial resources to defeat those using terror, often nonstate actors targeting noncombatants to instill fear in the population

weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons which can kill or bring major harm to large numbers of people or structures

caliphate

the notion that the Muslim world must have a caliph, a spiritual leader of Islam, heading the community

populism

belief that champions the common person, contrasting people's concerns with those of the elite; often opposing big business and financial interests

Endnotes

Note 16: Quoted in Peter Baker and Choe Sang-Hun, "Trump Threatens 'Fire and Fury' Against North Korea if It Endangers U.S.," New York Times, August 8, 2017. Return to reference 16

Note 17: See, for example, Odd Arne Westad, "The Sources of Chinese Conduct: Are Washington and Beijing Fighting a New Cold War?" Foreign Affairs 98:5 (September/ October 2019): 86–95. See also "Special Report, China and Americas—A New Kind of Cold War," The Economist, May 18, 2019, 3–16. On historical background, see Council on Foreign Relations, "Timeline: U.S. Relations with China 1949–2020." Return to reference 17

Note 18: See, for example, the articles under "The New Nationalism" debate in Foreign Affairs 98:2 (March/April 2019): 10–68. Return to reference 18

Note 19: Brian Wong, “How Chinese Nationalism Is Changing,” The Diplomat, May 26, 2020. Return to reference 19

Note 20: See Fareed Zakaria, “Populism on the March,” Foreign Affairs 95:6 (November/December 2016): 9–15. See the other articles in the same issue, “The Power of Populism.” See especially Pankaj Mishra, “The Globalization of Rage: Why Today’s Extremism Looks Familiar,” pp. 46–54. That article is based on a book by the same author, Age of Anger: A History of the Present (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2017).

Return to reference 20

Note 21: See “Has Covid-19 Killed Globalisation?” The Economist, May 14, 2020; and James Crabtree, “Coronavirus Crisis Will Send Globalization into Reverse,” Nikkei Asian Review, March 25, 2020. Return to reference 21

IN SUM: LEARNING FROM HISTORY

We have taken the first step in understanding contemporary international relations by looking to the past. We have focused on how core concepts of international relations have emerged and evolved over time, most notably the state, sovereignty, the nation, and the balance of power. Each concept developed within a specific historical context, providing the building blocks for contemporary international relations. The state is well established, but its sovereignty may be eroding from without and from within. The principal characteristics of the contemporary international system are in the process of changing as the Cold War divisions end and new Cold Wars and new trends emerge.

To help us further understand the trends of the past and how they influence contemporary thinking, we turn to theory. Theory gives order to analysis; it provides generalized explanations for specific events. In Chapter 3, we will look at competing theories of international relations. These theories view the past from quite different perspectives.

Discussion Questions

The Treaties of Westphalia are often viewed as the beginning of modern international relations. Why is that a useful benchmark?

Colonization by the great powers of Europe has officially ended. However, the effects of the colonial era linger. Explain with specific examples.

The Cold War has ended. Discuss two current events in which Cold War politics persist.

The development of international relations as a discipline have been closely identified with the history of Western Europe and the United States. With this pro-Western bias, what might we be missing?

Which recent events do you think will have the most significant long-term effect on international relations? Why?

Key Terms

balance of power (p. 31) caliphate (p. 58) capitalism (p. 42) Cold War (p. 40)

colonialism (p. 28) containment (p. 41) détente (p. 52)

domino effect (p. 48) hegemon (p. 31)

imperialism (p. 28) League of Nations (p. 36) legitimacy (p. 24) nationalism (p. 24) North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (p. 42) populism (p. 62)

rollback (p. 41)

socialism (p. 42) sovereignty (p. 20)

summits (p. 52)

superpowers (p. 41) Third Reich (p. 37) Treaties of Westphalia (p. 20) war on terror (p. 57) Warsaw Pact (p. 42) weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (p. 58)

Glossary

balance of power

any system in which actors (e.g., states) enjoy relatively equal power, such that no single state or coalition of states is able to dominate other actors in the system

caliphate

the notion that the Muslim world must have a caliph, a spiritual leader of Islam, heading the community

capitalism

the economic system in which the ownership of the means of production is in private hands; the system operates according to market forces whereby capital and labor move freely

Cold War

the era in international relations between the end of World War II and 1990, distinguished by ideological, economic, political, and military rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States

colonialism

the practice of founding, maintaining, and expanding a state's reach to territory abroad, motivated by expectation of economic gain, political agreement, or cultural supremacy

containment

a foreign policy designed to prevent the expansion of an adversary by blocking its opportunities to expand through foreign aid programs or through use of coercive force; the major U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era

détente

the easing of tense relations; in the context of this volume, détente refers to the relaxation and reappraisal of threat assessments by political rivals, for example, the United States and Soviet Union during the later years of the Cold War

domino effect

a metaphor that posits that the loss of influence over one state to an adversary will necessarily lead to a subsequent loss of control over neighboring states, just as dominos fall one after another

hegemon

a dominant state that has a preponderance of power; often establishes and enforces the rules and norms in the international system

imperialism

the policy and practice of extending the domination of one state over another through territorial conquest or economic domination

League of Nations

the international organization formed at the conclusion of World War I for the purpose of preventing another war; based on collective security

legitimacy

the moral and legal right to rule, which is based on law, custom, heredity, or the consent of the governed

nationalism

a sense of national consciousness where people identify with a common history, language, or customs, often placing primary emphasis on one's own nation's culture and interests over those of other nations

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

military and political alliance between Western European states and the United States established in 1948 for the purpose of defending Europe from aggression by the Soviet Union and its allies; post–Cold War expansion to Eastern Europe

populism

belief that champions the common person, contrasting people's concerns with those of the elite; often opposing big business and financial interests

rollback

a strategy of using, or threatening the use of, armed force to aggressively coerce an adversary into abandoning occupied territory

socialism

an economic and social system that relies on intensive government intervention or public ownership of the means of production in order to distribute wealth among the population more equitably; in radical Marxist theory, the stage between capitalism and communism

sovereignty

the authority of the state, based on recognition by other states and by nonstate actors, to govern matters within its own borders that affect its people, economy, security, and form of government

summits

talks and meetings among the highest-level government officials from different countries

superpowers

highest-power states as distinguished from other great powers; term coined during the Cold War to refer to the United States and the Soviet Union

Third Reich

the German state from 1933–45; a time which coincides with the rule of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Workers Party, or "Nazis"

Treaties of Westphalia

treaties ending the Thirty Years War in Europe in 1648; in international relations represents the beginning of state sovereignty within a territorial space

war on terror

declaring to use a given society's material and nonmaterial resources to defeat those using terror, often nonstate actors targeting noncombatants to instill fear in the population

Warsaw Pact

the military alliance formed by the states of the Soviet bloc in 1955 in response to the rearmament of West Germany and its

inclusion in NATO; permitted the stationing of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe

weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons which can kill or bring major harm to large numbers of people or structures

3

International Relations Theories

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Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdo?an (left) has voiced support for Nicolás Maduro (right), the disputed leader of Venezuela, despite historical alliances with countries like the United States that oppose Maduro's rule. Why would two countries form a relationship without shared cultural or historical ties?

In January 2019, in defiance of Venezuela's leader Nicolás Maduro's repressive rule, more than 50 states including the United States recognized the leader of the opposition party, Juan Guaidó, as interim president of Venezuela. However, Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdo?an, voiced public support for Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate president. Turkey has become the cornerstone of Venezuela's gold trade, providing Venezuela much-needed revenue in the face of the comprehensive sanctions the United States has placed on it. But Turkey's support for Maduro is puzzling given that Turkey shares membership with the United States in NATO, and Turkey's support for Maduro is increasing tensions with Washington. Moreover, Turkey does not share historical or cultural ties with Venezuela. So why is Turkey pursuing this strategy of support for Maduro?

Some international relations scholars argue that this is an "alliance of convenience."1 U.S.-Turkey relations had been deteriorating for a while, particularly following the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and U.S. refusal to extradite the person considered responsible. As its relationship with Washington has worsened, Turkey has worked to position itself as an anti-

imperialist actor that challenges U.S. policies against the countries it "oppresses." A policy of allying with anti-American regimes such as Maduro's helps to solidify its power position vis-à-vis the United States. Other scholars point to the domestic situation in Turkey. Turkish businesses have a strong interest in gaining access to Latin American markets, and Erdo?an is working to appease those interests by negotiating favorable investment and venture contracts in Venezuela. Still others point to the importance of the shared identity between Erdo?an and Maduro. Both share an anti-West sentiment and share common ground on questions revolving around independence, nonintervention in other states' affairs, and democracy (both practice authoritarian-style rule).

So what explains Turkey's support for Maduro in Venezuela? Is it Turkey's desire to stand up against the United States? Are domestic politics at work? Is it a question of similar identities? Or are state efforts trying to help businesses expand? The facts are the same, but the explanations differ widely. Which one is right? Can several be right? In this chapter, we seek to answer these types of questions by better understanding the different perspectives that various scholars use to approach the explanation of international politics.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain the value of studying international relations from a theoretical perspective.

Explain the central tenets of realism, liberalism, constructivism, and radicalism, as well as the feminist critiques of them.

Analyze contemporary international events using different theoretical perspectives.

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Endnotes

Note 01: Imdat Oner, "Turkey and Venezuela: An Alliance of Convenience," Wilson Center, March 2020, www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/docum

ents/LAP_200317_ven%20turkey_v2%20%281%29.pdf (accessed 1/5/21). Return to reference 1

THINKING THEORETICALLY

A theory is a set of propositions that combine to explain phenomena by specifying the relationships among several concepts. It is a story of "why" a relationship exists between those concepts. The concept whose variation is being explained is referred to as the "dependent variable," and the concepts that are thought to do the explaining are referred to as "explanatory variables." For example, consider the concepts of human rights and authoritarianism. An example of a theory about the relationship between these two concepts would be an argument that authoritarian regimes are more likely to violate human rights because they need to suppress their opposition to remain in power. In this theory, variation in a state's respect for human rights (the dependent variable) can be "explained," in part, by variation in the authoritarian nature of the government (the explanatory variable).

To evaluate the strength of a theory's ability to explain a particular phenomenon, we generate testable hypotheses: specific falsifiable statements that question the proposed relationship among two or more concepts. For example, a falsifiable statement derived from the theory proposed above is, "The more authoritarian a state government, the more human rights violations we are likely to see." If we see a pattern that more authoritarian states violate human rights to a greater degree, this would support our theory. If we do not see such a pattern, this would call our theory into question. Even if our theory is supported, it is important to remember that theories are never absolute. There are many potential explanations for why we see human rights abuses, and theories cannot necessarily explain all cases of a particular phenomenon. What we see when we test hypotheses is that our theory can help explain a pattern that likely exists in human rights violations. It is not the only explanation for those violations, nor is it an absolute explanation.

Good theories are generalizable. They can explain events across space (e.g., this explanation for war works just as well

in Europe as it does in Africa) and time (e.g., it works just as well today as it did in the tenth century). Theories that can explain patterns across space and time are powerful theories.

A famous example of a powerful theory from the natural sciences is Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin's theory of natural selection and his concept of survival of the fittest explain what had previously been puzzling variation in the coloration and beak shapes of identical species of birds in different environments. We say that Darwin's theory is powerful because it has survived testing and modifications over the years. Its logic is consistent, even with evidence unavailable to Darwin at the time he formulated his theory. The theory is therefore very general in the sense that it can explain seemingly unique variations across space and time. Yet in neither natural nor social sciences do we ever consider theories to be "proven" or "settled" or "fact." Theories, whether Darwin's or Albert Einstein's natural science theories or Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory of international relations, can always be overturned or refuted by new evidence or a better theory. Theories are therefore not explanations that scientists "believe in." Rather, we say they are stronger or weaker, or more or less supported.

Moving from description to explanation to theory, and from theory to testable hypotheses, is not an entirely linear process. Although theory depends on a logical deduction of hypotheses from assumptions and a testing of the hypotheses as more and more data are collected in the empirical world, we often must revise or adjust theories. This process is, in part, a creative exercise, in which we must be tolerant of ambiguity, concerned about probabilities, and distrustful of absolutes.

North American multinational corporations, in addition to Peruvian companies, work to extract gold from South America's largest gold mine, Yanacocha, located in Peru. How can different theories help us to better understand the role multinational corporations are playing here?

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International relations (IR) theories come in various forms. In this chapter, we introduce four theoretical perspectives of

international relations. The first three are the main tenets of studies of international relations today: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. A fourth perspective, radicalism, is not as prevalent in the study of international relations today, but its arguments are important to consider. These theoretical perspectives are sets of theories united by common themes. There are common actors, concepts, and issues on which they focus their explanations for various international events. The theories within these perspectives seek to explain phenomena such as war, peace, cooperation, oppression, economic development, the creation of international law, efforts to protect human rights and the environment, and many others. The chapters that follow demonstrate how these theories seek to explain some of these phenomena in more detail. This chapter focuses on highlighting the common themes that connect the various theories within each perspective.

Check Your Understanding

What does “good theories are generalizable” mean? Theories should be able to be proven and should be settled as fact.

Dependent variables should logically and clearly cause explanatory variables.

A strong theory can explain events across different times and in different places.

Theories should proceed from description to explanation and then to hypothesis testing.

Glossary

theory

a collection of propositions that combine to explain phenomena by specifying the relationships among a set of concepts

hypotheses

specific falsifiable statements that question the proposed relationship among two or more concepts

theoretical perspectives

sets of theories united by some common themes such as actors, concepts, and issues

COMPONENTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

Within each perspective, different theories focus on different factors in international politics. Some of these factors are material entities (entities with a physical presence) such as states, international institutions, multinational corporations, and individuals. Some are more conceptual factors and include the idea of an international system, as well as ideas about norms and identities.

The state is a key actor in international politics in many international relations theories. As discussed in Chapter 2, states are considered to be sovereign entities in the international system, meaning that that they are not subject to the commands of others; they have independent control over themselves and their decisions. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, to be considered a state, an entity must have a defined territory, a stable population, and an effective government, and must be recognized by other states as having the capacity to enter into relations with them. Many international relations theories treat the state as a unitary actor in international politics. In other words, they personify the state, treating it as an actor that has its own defined interests and chooses its own actions in the international system. It speaks and acts with one voice. However, not all theories use this unitary actor approach. Some theories look at characteristics of the state and its domestic politics in order to explain various phenomena in international politics.

International institutions are also central actors in international politics for many international relations theories. International relations scholars define international institutions as sets of rules meant to govern state or international behavior. Rules, in this context, are conceived of as statements that forbid, require, or permit particular kinds of actions.2 An institution can be a formal organization such as the United Nations or the European Union that embodies particular sets of rules, but it

can also be a treaty such as the Law of the Sea Treaty or the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

Some international relations theories focus attention on the role that multinational corporations play in international politics. These corporations span state borders, connecting states together in important ways. IBM, a U.S.-based company, operates in more than 170 countries, spanning all continents except Antarctica. Hyundai is a Korean car manufacturer, but it has manufacturing, engineering, and research and design facilities across the United States. Multinational corporations (MNCs) not only invest in other countries by building up operations within them but also acquire interest in foreign companies, or engage in mergers or joint ventures with them. Multinational corporations also trade with one another both within and across state borders, creating important economic connections between states (see Chapter 8).

Some international relations theories focus on individuals and their actions in order to explain various events in international politics. Individual state leaders and their personal characteristics influence their state's foreign policy choices and hence international relations. Russia governed by Vladimir Putin today is very different from Russia governed by Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s. The foreign policy of President Joseph Biden is very different from the foreign policy of his predecessor, President Donald Trump. The leaders in charge influence foreign policy, and thus international politics, in important ways. Non-elite individuals acting alone or in groups can also influence international politics.

Factors that influence outcomes in international politics can also be more conceptual in nature. For example, some theories focus on the role that the international system plays in affecting outcomes. The idea that the international system can influence international politics means that characteristics of a set of states taken together, and their relationships, contribute in important ways to international relations. Attributes of the international system as a whole, such as how many major

powers exist in the system at any given time, are therefore important to consider when studying international politics.

Two other conceptual factors that some international relations theories focus on are identities and norms. An identity is a sense of self, based on certain qualities and beliefs that serve to define a person or group. For some theories in international relations, group identities, in particular, are central for understanding interactions in the international system. These group identities can be associated with the state (such as living in the state of France) and particular state characteristics (such as living in a democracy). They can also be associated with ethnicity, language, and religion. These identities allow groups to recognize similarities and differences between themselves and others, thus shaping their behavior toward each other. Groups also act based on particular norms associated with their identities.

Norms are collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity. A norm can be as simple as shaking hands when you meet someone in the United States or bowing to show appreciation and respect in many Asian societies. In the international system, norms can provide expectations about the proper behavior of states, such as respecting human rights and being transparent on international security issues. Most states, most of the time, respect these norms. These norms can even become codified into international treaties. Many treaties deal with human rights issues, and there are multiple treaties governing transparency issues in which states agree to report information about their military capabilities and activities to other states. Even without codification in treaties, however, some theories of international relations argue that the norms associated with various types of identities can influence state behavior, and thus international politics, in important ways.

Different theories focus attention on different factors that they argue influence international politics. Theories within each perspective, however, tend to focus on similar factors. It is therefore important to understand these perspectives, in order to understand how the various theories that fall within each perspective approach the study of international relations.

Check Your Understanding

There are several kinds of factors that theories might use to explain international relations. Those with physical presence, such as states, individuals, or international institutions are known as what kind of factors or entities? material

radical

organizational

conceptual

Glossary

international institutions

sets of rules such as international treaties and organizations meant to govern international behavior

multinational corporations (MNCs)

private enterprises which span state borders through the actual presence in, investments in, or trade with other countries

identity

a sense of self based on certain qualities and beliefs that define a person or group

norms

collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity

Endnotes

Note 02: Lisa L. Martin and Beth A. Simmons, “International Organizations and Institutions,” in Handbook of International Relations, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London: Sage, 2013), p. 328. Return to reference 2

REALISM

Realism is a fundamental perspective from which some theorists approach the study of international politics. The factors on which realists focus most attention are the state and the international system. For most realists, states are unitary actors that rationally pursue their own national interests (the

protection of territory and sovereignty) when they act within an anarchic international system. This idea of anarchy refers to the fact that in the international system there exists no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws, resolve disputes, or enforce law and order. International politics is therefore very different from domestic politics. In domestic politics, the government sits above its citizens. It can create laws that the citizens must follow and can enforce those laws by punishing those who do not. In the anarchic international system, no such authority exists. Given this condition of anarchy, realists argue that states can rely only on themselves to protect against attacks or other forms of coercion from other states in the system. Their most important interest is therefore to increase their power—the material resources necessary to physically harm or coerce other states. Realists see states as increasing their power in two possible ways: (1) through war (and conquest) or (2) by balancing against powerful states by taking actions to offset their power and thus fend off a potential attack. According to realists, states' main focus is their security.

The Roots of Realism

Even though its direct application to international affairs is more recent, realism is the product of a long historical and philosophical tradition. At least four of the central assumptions of realism are found as far back in history as Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, written in the 400s BCE.3 First, for Thucydides, the state (in this case, Athens or Sparta) is the principal actor in war and in politics in general, just as today's realists posit. Although other actors, such as international institutions, may participate, their impact on the system is marginal. Second, the state is assumed to be a unitary actor. No subnational actors try to overturn the government's decisions or subvert the state's interests; the state acts as a single entity. Third, states are assumed to be rational actors. In other words, they make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of various options against the goal to be achieved. Fourth, like contemporary realists, Thucydides argued that states are focused on security—their

need to protect themselves from enemies both foreign and domestic.

Thomas Hobbes articulated another central tenet that virtually all realist theorists accept: that states exist in an anarchic international system. Hobbes maintained that individuals in a hypothetical "state of nature" have the responsibility and the right to preserve themselves. This includes the right to use violence against others. In his most famous treatise, Leviathan, Hobbes argued that the only cure for perpetual war that was likely to result was the emergence of a single powerful "leviathan"—a sovereign individual/government that could oversee and enforce rules on the people. Applying his arguments to relations among sovereign states, Hobbes depicted a condition of anarchy where the norm for states is "having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another."4 In the absence of an international sovereign to enforce rules, few rules or norms can restrain states. War—defined by Hobbes as a climate in which peace cannot be guaranteed—would be perpetual.

In sum, by the twentieth century, most of the central tenets of realism were well established. Given a system in which no authority exists to enforce law and order (an anarchic system), states have to rely on self-help. It is thus essential for states to seek power to protect themselves. According to prominent post–World War II realist Hans Morgenthau (1904–80), this idea explains why peace in the international system would always prove elusive.5

Realism in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

In the aftermath of World War II, Morgenthau wrote the foundational synthesis of realism in international politics. For Morgenthau, just as for Thucydides and Hobbes, international politics is best characterized as a struggle for power. In this context, both military and economic power matter. Economic power can be used for coercion, in and of itself, and can also be translated into military power, if needed. Both types of power are therefore sought by states in order to protect themselves.

Because of this constant struggle for power, realists argue that states are concerned with relative gains. In contrast to absolute gains, which refers to how much one state gains for itself, relative gains refers to how much more one state gains over another. When one state gains relative to another state, it can feel more secure because it can better fend off an attack from the other, or can more successfully launch its own attack against the other. At the same time, a relative loss makes a state more susceptible to attack, and thus more insecure. In a realist world, as scholar John Mearsheimer argued, power (and gains in power) are therefore viewed in relative rather than absolute terms.6

Thus, even if both states can gain in absolute terms from cooperative interactions—be they cooperative security efforts or cooperative economic exchanges—the state that gains more relative to the other has a security advantage, and the one that gains less becomes more insecure and susceptible to attack. Despite being able to gain something in absolute terms, the state that would lose in relative terms has an incentive not to cooperate with the other. It needs to protect itself from the insecurity that would result from the relative gain for the other (and thus loss for itself) that would result. Cooperation is therefore difficult to achieve, and tensions between states are likely to result.

This concern for relative gains can lead to what realists call a security dilemma. As the political scientist John Herz described, a state working to ensure security from attack is driven to acquire more and more power. This, however, renders other states more insecure, which drives them to acquire more power. This makes the first state less secure, and it thus works to gain more power. And the spiral continues.7 The security dilemma, then, results in a permanent condition of tension and power conflicts among states, even if none actually seek conquest and war. In other words, security is a zero-sum game. A gain in security for one state is a loss for the other.

Relative gains concerns and the security dilemma are important explanations for costly arms races. For example, India and Pakistan have been engaged in a nuclear arms race

since they first began developing nuclear weapons in the 1970s. By 2020, both sides had over 150 nuclear warheads. Escalating the race, India said in 2016 that it had begun testing its first homemade nuclear-powered submarine, as well as a nuclear missile capable of striking all of Pakistani territory from far offshore. In 2017, Pakistan said it had tested its own undersea nuclear missile that was capable of carrying out a retaliatory strike. In early 2017, India tested interceptor missiles as part of its plan to develop a ballistic missile defense shield. Pakistan responded, testing a missile with multiple warheads capable of evading the shield. In other words, the concern that India was achieving greater gains by increasing its arms made Pakistan more insecure. So it increased its own arms. In turn, the concern about Pakistan's gain in power made India feel less secure, thus leading it to further increase its arms in order to ensure its own security. The focus on relative gains has led to a security dilemma and arms race between India and Pakistan. Realists would argue that this example suggests that the struggle for power is ever present in the international system.

In this struggle for power, one focus of many realists is the idea of managing power through "balancing." This can take two forms: internal or external. Internal balancing refers to a state's building up its own military resources and capabilities in order to be able to stand against more powerful states. External balancing refers to allying with other states to offset the power of more powerful states. In both cases, the objective is to ensure the ability to fend off an attack from more powerful states, with the goal of deterring such attacks in the first place. A relative balance can deter both sides from engaging in an attack, thus helping to prevent war.

George Kennan (1904–2005), a writer and chair of the State Department's policy-planning staff in the late 1940s and later the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, is known to have based his policy recommendations on this balance-of-power realist theory. Kennan was one of the architects of the U.S. Cold War policy of containment, an interpretation of the balance of power. The goal of containment was to prevent Soviet power from extending into regions beyond its

immediate, existing sphere of influence (Eastern Europe), thus balancing U.S. power against Soviet power. Containment was an important alternative to the competing strategy of "rollback," in which a combination of nuclear and conventional military threats would be used to force the Soviet Union out of Eastern Europe and, in particular, Germany. Rollback would increase U.S. power relative to that of the Soviet Union, upsetting the balance. Kennan's fear of uncontrolled escalation to a third world war ultimately led to the adoption of containment as U.S. foreign policy.

While realism appears to offer clear policy prescriptions, not all realists agree on what an ideal foreign policy might look like. In particular, a divide exists between defensive and offensive realists. Defensive realists observe that few, if any, major wars in the last century ended up benefiting the state or states that started them. Threatened states, they argue, tend to balance against aggressors, invariably overwhelming and reversing whatever initial gains were made for the state that started the war. Offensive realists, on the other hand, argue that conquest can yield significant benefits to a state by creating a reputation for a willingness to use force. That reputation can help a state get others to do what it wants for fear of war being waged against them as well. Two different sets of foreign policy actions help illustrate the defensive and offensive realists' argument.

Defensive realists would point to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's attempt to conquer and annex neighboring Kuwait in 1990 as an illustration of their argument that war is more costly than it is beneficial. In August 1990, Iraq's armed forces quickly overwhelmed the defenses of Kuwait. Before the invasion, Kuwait had been a little-known, oil-rich Arab state in which a repressive hereditary elite ruled over a population composed mainly of servants hired from surrounding Arab countries (in particular, Palestinian Arabs). However, although critics pointed out that Kuwait was itself a less-than-ideal candidate for rescue, Saddam's aggression provoked a powerful international reaction. In 1991, an international coalition of armed forces, led by the United States, invaded Kuwait and rapidly forced the retreat and later surrender of the

Iraqi army. Iraq was forced to repay all the damages from its aggressive actions. Conquest, in other words, was costly for Iraq.

For defensive realists, the outcome of Iraq's 1990 war forms part of a long historical pattern of effective (and inevitable) balancing. In this case, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and others supported Kuwait to balance against Iraq's regional power. Because this balancing against an aggressor is inevitable, defensive realists argue that states should pursue policies of restraint, whether through military, diplomatic, or economic channels. Such moderate defensive postures can be pursued without leading to dangerous levels of mistrust among states and, more importantly, without fear of unintended or uncontrolled escalation to counterproductive wars.

Offensive realists, by contrast, note that periodically demonstrating a willingness to engage in war, though perhaps costly in the short run, may pay huge dividends in reputation enhancement later. The credible threat of conquest can often act as a motivation to alter other states' interests by making them believe that they could be the targets of conquest as well. To avoid a war waged against them, states that might have opposed the threatening state thus choose to ally with it instead—a process international relations theorists call bandwagoning. The logic is that the more power you have, the more power you get. Conquest, in other words, pays. States may thus pursue expansionist politics, building up their relative power positions and intimidating potential rivals into cooperation.

Consider the case of Libya's decision in December 2003 to publicly acknowledge and then abandon its years-long efforts to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, along with the vehicles to launch them. To an offensive realist, Libya's decision to abandon its efforts could well have been the result of the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in March 2003—an invasion that the United States justified as an effort to halt Iraq's production or dissemination of weapons of mass destruction. In the face of this demonstration of U.S. power, Libya chose to bandwagon with the United States, after years of having stood opposed to it, and gave up its policy to acquire

weapons of mass destruction. By offensive realist logic, the costs of the war against Iraq were at least partly redeemed by Libya's change of policy; conquest, or the credible threat of conquest, paid for the United States.

Neorealism

Realism, as a general perspective, encompasses a family of related arguments that share common assumptions and premises. It is not itself a single, unified theory. Among the various reinterpretations of what is referred to as "classical realism," the most important is neorealism (or structural realism), as delineated in Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics.8 Reasoning that lack of progress in the social scientific theory of international politics was due to lack of theoretical rigor (especially in comparison to steady theoretical progress in the natural sciences), Waltz undertook this reinterpretation of classical realism to make political realism a more rigorous theory of international politics. Neorealists therefore propose general laws to explain events: they simplify explanations of behavior in anticipation of being better able to explain and predict trends.

While traditional realists attach importance to the characteristics of states and human nature, neorealists give precedence in their analyses to the structure of the international system as an explanatory factor. Attempting to understand the international system by reference to states is analogous, in Waltz's view, to attempting to understand a market by reference to individual firms: unproductive at best. Neorealism thus advances two normative arguments and one theoretical argument. The first normative argument is that we need theory to understand international politics (and that prior to the publication of Waltz's book, we had none), and the second is that his theory, neorealism, explains international politics since 1648, the date scholars cite for the advent of the Westphalian state system. Waltz's theoretical argument is that the amount of peace and war in an anarchic international system depends critically on the distribution of power, described in terms of system structure.

Waltz argued that the distribution of power in the international system can be described as having one of three possible forms: (1) unipolar, where one state in the system has sufficient power to defeat all the others combined against it; (2) bipolar, where most of the system's power is divided between two states or coalitions of states; and (3) multipolar, in which power is divided among three or more states or coalitions of states. According to neorealists, the structure of the system and the distribution of power within it, rather than the characteristics of individual states, determine outcomes. Some realists argue that the closer the overall distribution of power approaches to unipolarity, the greater the likelihood (but never the certainty) of peace.9 Balance-of-power theorists, in contrast, would highlight the importance of a bipolar system for increasing the likelihood of peace, as the bipolar system represents a basic balance of power between the two most powerful states.

Other interpretations of realism have also been developed. Although neorealism simplifies the classical realist theory and focuses on a few core concepts (such as system structure), other reinterpretations add increased complexity to realism. In War and Change in World Politics, Robert Gilpin offers one such reinterpretation. Accepting the realist assumptions that states are the principal actors, decision makers are basically rational, and the international system structure plays a key role in determining power, Gilpin examines 2,400 years of history, finding that the distribution of power among states is central in understanding every international system. What Gilpin adds is the notion of dynamism, of history as a series of cycles—cycles of the birth, expansion, and demise of dominant powers. Whereas classical realism offers no satisfactory rationale for the decline of powers, Gilpin finds the answer in economic power. Hegemons decline because of three processes: (1) the tendency for the returns from controlling an empire to decrease over time; (2) the tendency for economic hegemons to consume more and invest less over time; and (3) the diffusion of technology through which new powers challenge the hegemon. As Gilpin explains, "Disequilibrium replaces equilibrium, and the world moves toward a new round of hegemonic conflict."10

THEORY IN BRIEF

Realism/Neorealism

Key Actors

States (most powerful matter most)

Characteristics of Individuals

Insecure, selfish, power seeking

Characteristics of States

Unitary actors, rational, act in national interest to protect territory and sovereignty

Characteristics of the International System

Anarchic (implies perpetual threat of war)

Beliefs about Change

Possibility of perpetual peace logically precluded; emphasis shifted to managing the frequency and intensity of war

Major Theorists

Thucydides, Hobbes, Morgenthau, Waltz, Gilpin, Mearsheimer

In short, there is no single tradition of political realism; there are multiple realist theories, each of which focuses on different explanatory variables to help explain international politics. Although each theory is predicated on a key group of assumptions, each attaches different importance to the various core propositions. What unites the various realist theories is their emphasis on the unitary state in an anarchic international system, the importance of power and the ability to use force as an effective tool of foreign policy, and the existence of the threat of war that can be managed but never done away with. These emphases distinguish them from other schools of thought.

Check Your Understanding

What do realists mean when they say the state is a “unitary actor”? States join international institutions so that they can act in unison.

Individuals lobby state governments to try and persuade them of their views.

The state is the most important level of analysis to focus on when analyzing events.

No subnational actors try to overturn the government's decision once it has been reached.

What would be most important to a neorealist in explaining events in international relations? the international institutions relevant to the event

the economic dimension of the situation

the identities of groups involved in a situation

the structure of the international system

Glossary

realism

a theory of international relations that emphasizes states' interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world; based on the notion that individuals are power seeking and that states act in pursuit of their own national interest defined in terms of power

national interest

the interest of the state, most basically the protection of territory and sovereignty; in realist thinking, the interest is a unitary one defined in terms of the pursuit of power; in liberal thinking, there are many national interests; in radical thinking, it is the interest of a ruling elite

anarchy

the fact that there exists no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws, resolve disputes, or enforce law and order in the system

balancing

taking actions to offset the power of more powerful states

rational actors

actors that make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of various options against the goal to be achieved

relative gains

how much more one state gains over another

security dilemma

the situation in which each state tries to increase its own power to protect itself, but this increased power is seen as a threat by other states, leading them to be more insecure and thus to seek to increase their own power which, in turn, makes others more insecure

internal balancing

a state building up its own military resources and capabilities in order to be able to stand against more powerful states

external balancing

allying with other states to offset the power of more powerful states

bandwagoning

a process in which states that might have opposed a threatening state choose to ally with it instead

neorealism

a reinterpretation of realism that posits that the structure of the international system is the most important level to study; states behave the way they do because of the structure of the international system; includes the belief that general laws can be found to explain events

Endnotes

Note 03: Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, trans. Rex Warner, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972). Return to reference 3

Note 04: Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1968), p. 13. Return to reference 4

Note 05: Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th ed., rev. (New York: Knopf, 1978). Return to reference 5

Note 06: John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” International Security 19:3 (Winter 1994–95): 5–49. Return to reference 6

Note 07: John Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” World Politics 2:2 (January 1950): 157–80. Return to reference 7

Note 08: Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979). Return to reference 8

Note 09: Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory,” in Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge, ed. Charles W. Kegley Jr. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1995), pp. 67–82. Return to reference 9

Note 10: Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 210. Return to reference 10

LIBERALISM

Like realism, liberalism has a diverse set of theories, rooted in centuries-old thinking that continues to be updated today. Realists, however, focus mostly on the unitary state actor and the international system to explain international politics. Liberal theories also focus on the state and the international system, but they highlight specific characteristics of the state and the international system as important explanatory factors.

The Roots of Liberalism

The origins of liberal theory are found in eighteenth-century Enlightenment optimism, nineteenth-century political and economic liberalism, and twentieth-century Wilsonian idealism. The contribution of the Enlightenment to liberalism rests on the Greek idea that individuals are rational human beings, able to understand the universally applicable laws governing both nature and human society. Understanding such laws means that people have the capacity to improve their

condition by creating a just society. Thus, liberals believe that injustice, war, and aggression are not inevitable but can be moderated or even eliminated through institutional reform or collective action.

The writings of the French philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755), reflect Enlightenment thinking. Montesquieu argued that human nature is not defective, but rather, problems arise as humanity enters civil society and forms separate nations. War is a product of society, not an attribute inherent in individuals.

Likewise, the writings of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) form the core of Enlightenment beliefs. According to Kant, international anarchy can be overcome through a particular kind of collective action—a federation of republics in which sovereignties would be left intact. Like other liberal philosophers, Kant held out the possibility that nations could transcend the limitations of anarchy in the international system and war could wither away. Unlike others, however, Kant did not assume or require moral actors in his philosophy. On the contrary, Kant assumed that states would act in self-interested ways and that the repeated interaction of self-interested states would eventually lead to an expanding zone of peace, in spite of that self-interest. As he famously put it, what is required for the emergence of perpetual peace is not moral angels, but "rational devils."11

Nineteenth-century liberalism took this rational approach from the Enlightenment and reformulated it by adding a preference for democracy over aristocracy and for free trade over national economic self-sufficiency. Sharing the Enlightenment's optimistic view of human nature, nineteenth-century liberalism saw humanity as capable of satisfying its natural needs and wants in rational ways. These needs and wants could be met most efficiently when each individual pursued his or her own freedom and autonomy in a democratic state, unfettered by excessive governmental restrictions. Likewise, political freedoms are most easily achieved in capitalist states, where rational and acquisitive human beings can improve their own conditions, maximizing both individual and collective economic growth and economic welfare. Free markets must be

allowed to flourish, and governments must permit the free flow of trade and commerce. Liberal theorists believe that free trade and commerce create interdependencies among states, thus raising the cost of war and reducing its likelihood.

Early-twentieth-century "idealist" theory also contributed to liberalism, finding its greatest adherent in U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, who authored the covenant of the League of Nations. The basic proposition of Wilson's idealism is that war is preventable through the collective action of states or through legal instruments such as mediation, arbitration, and international courts. More than half of the League covenant's 26 provisions focused on preventing war. The covenant even included a provision legitimizing the notion of collective security, whereby aggression by one state would be countered by automatic and collective reaction, embodied in a "league of nations." Thus, the League of Nations illustrated the importance that liberals place on the potential of international institutions to deal with war and the opportunity for collective problem solving in a multilateral forum.

Overall, the basis of liberalism remains firmly embedded in the belief in the rationality of human beings, the notion that humans are inherently social, living and working in groups, and that through learning and education, humans can develop institutions capable of ensuring and advancing human welfare.

During the interwar period, when the League of Nations proved incapable of maintaining collective security, and during World War II, when atrocities like the Holocaust made many question the basic goodness of humanity, liberalism came under intense criticism. Was humankind inherently good? How could an institution fashioned under the best assumptions have failed so miserably? Liberalism as a theoretical perspective fell out of favor and was replaced by realism and its preferred solution to the scourge of war: a balance of power.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism

Key Actors

States, nongovernmental groups, international organizations

Characteristics of Individuals

Basically good; social; capable of cooperating

Characteristics of States

States are rational; states have relationships (enduring friends and rivals); state characteristics (democratic-liberal, authoritarian-autarkic) matter; actors within states can influence state actions

Characteristics of the International System

Anarchy abridged by interdependence among actors; an international order

Beliefs about Change

Self-interest managed by structure (institutions) leads to possibility of cooperation and peace

Major Theorists

Montesquieu, Kant, Wilson, Keohane, Moravcsik

Neoliberal Institutionalism

In the 1970s, a new branch of liberalism—referred to as neoliberal institutionalism—arose based on the observation that states in the international system actually cooperate most of the time. This is contrary to the realist predictions that cooperation is very difficult for states to achieve because of their concern for relative gains and the existence of the security dilemma. Liberals like Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye asked why we see so much cooperation, even under the anarchic conditions of the international system. Their answer lies in their idea of complex interdependence, which has three components.12 First, states are connected through multiple channels, not just through direct formal interactions. Informal interactions between governments often take place, and actors like multinational corporations span state borders, connecting states in important ways. Second, there is not a hierarchy of issues. States are concerned not only about security but also about other issues on which they share common interests. Third, the result is a decline in the use of military force.

Although formal meetings between global leaders often foster cooperation, informal talks between heads of state can facilitate discussion on difficult issues more effectively. It is an important type of connection between states, as highlighted by the theory of complex interdependence. Here, German chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Emmanuel Macron meet during the EU summit in 2020.

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Building on Keohane and Nye's argument and focus on cooperation, neoliberal institutionalist theory has developed since the 1970s. The assumptions of neoliberal institutionalism are the same as those of realism—states are key unitary actors in international politics that rationally pursue their own self-interest in an anarchic international system. Yet even though neoliberal institutionalists accept these realist assumptions, they argue that states can cooperate. As discussed in Chapter 7, neoliberal institutionalists posit that cooperation arises because states are engaged in continuous interactions and are not solely focused on relative gains. They care about absolute gains as well. Moreover, states focus not only on security but also on other issues on which they might share common interests. Trade and the environment are key examples. When states care about absolute gains, the gains from cooperative interactions become a key part of states' interests. When states interact over time, the gains from cooperation can accumulate and thus overcome their incentives to exploit the others' cooperative actions for their own short-term gain. This is particularly true with regard to nonsecurity issues such as economics, in which gains from cooperation in trade and investment can be had by all. Reciprocity over time can help sustain this incentive, especially when complex interdependence characterizes states' relationships and there are multiple channels and multiple issues in which reciprocity can be implemented.13 Power, therefore, does not rest solely on military might. Economic and social power also matter.

According to neoliberal institutionalists, international institutions—both organizations and treaties—play a key role in international politics by fostering these cooperative interactions. International organizations provide a guaranteed

framework for interactions, thus creating a situation in which continuous interaction is expected and reciprocity is fostered. For example, states in the European Union expect to engage in multiple interactions with each other across issues and over time. International treaties also create expectations of repeated interactions over time. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and subsequent United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) that were negotiated between the United States, Canada, and Mexico created an environment in which those states could expect to engage in trade relationships long into the future.

Neoliberal institutionalists arrive at the same prediction that other liberals do—cooperation—but their explanation for why cooperation occurs is different. For classical liberals, cooperation emerges from humanity's establishing and reforming institutions that permit cooperative interactions and prohibit coercive actions. For neoliberal institutionalists, cooperation emerges because when actors have continuous interactions with each other, it is in their self-interest to cooperate.

Other Liberal Theories

In contrast to neoliberal institutionalism, other branches of liberal theory do not treat the state as a unitary actor. They argue that state behavior at the international level is influenced in important ways by the domestic level. They have a "bottom up" view of international politics. As Andrew Moravcsik described, these liberal theories share several assumptions.[14] First, they argue that the key actors in international politics are individuals and private groups such as unions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and corporations. Second, states' actions represent some subset of those individuals and private groups. It is the interests of this subset of domestic society that define states' preferences and shape their actions. Third, state behavior is defined by the configuration of state preferences, rather than the configuration of state power. When states' underlying preferences are compatible, cooperation is likely to result. When they are at odds with one another, there is a high probability of tension and conflict. The substance and depth of

cooperation or conflict depends on the constellation of states' preferences.

For example, free trade is more likely when its net benefits are conferred to the most powerful domestic actors. This can happen when the actors that are most able to shape their governments' preferences are exporting industries that want to be able to compete in other states' markets. In contrast, protectionist policies are more likely when domestic groups (such as unions) and nonexporting industries that would incur costs from having to contend with foreign competitors have the greatest ability to shape their governments' preferences. In other words, it matters who the domestic group is that state leaders are responding to and whose preferences they choose to represent.

Other important liberal theories build on the work of Immanuel Kant and nineteenth-century liberalism. They highlight three key factors that can contribute to peace: democracy, economic interdependence, and international institutions. "Democratic peace" theorists argue (and have shown) that democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with one another. As discussed in Chapter 6, a variety of explanations are proposed by different theories in this branch of liberalism for why this is the case. "Commercial peace" theorists argue that war reduces the benefits of economic relations between states. States that are more economically interdependent are therefore less likely to go to war. Finally, a wide variety of theories focus on the role international institutions play in world politics. Classical liberal and neoliberal institutionalism's arguments about the role of institutions are prime examples. In addition, some liberal theories argue that when states share membership in a greater number of international institutions, they are likely to be more cooperative with one another, and thus less likely to engage in conflict.

Overall, as in realism, there are a wide variety of theories in the liberal perspective. Each focuses on different factors that, theorists argue, influence international politics, and each provides different insights into why states act the way they do. Liberal theories are united by their assumption that actors in

international politics are largely rational, that cooperation is possible and more likely than realists posit, and that states focus on issues beyond just security and survival.

Check Your Understanding

A foundation of liberalism is that humans are rational and social beings.

humans are rational, but not inherently social beings.

humans are irrational and social beings.

humans are irrational, but not inherently social beings.

Liberalism posits that cooperation between states is inevitable.

a result of capitalist expansion.

possible.

no longer feasible because of nuclear weapons.

Glossary

liberalism

the theoretical perspective based on the assumption of the innate goodness of the individual and the value of political institutions in promoting social progress

collective security

the idea that aggression by a state should be defeated collectively because aggression against one state is aggression against all

neoliberal institutionalism

a reinterpretation of liberalism that posits that even in an anarchic international system, states will cooperate because of their continuous interactions with each other and because it is in their self-interest to do so; institutions provide the framework for cooperative interactions

complex interdependence

states are connected through multiple channels (both formal and informal), there is no hierarchy of issues, and the result is a decline in the use of military force

Endnotes

Note 11: Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1957). Return to reference 11

Note 12: Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., Power and Interdependence (Boston: Little Brown, 1977). Return to reference 12

Note 13: Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," in Cooperation under Anarchy, ed. Kenneth Oye (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 226–54. Return to reference 13

Note 14: Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," International Organization 51:4 (Autumn 1997): 513–53. Return to reference 14

CONSTRUCTIVISM

A late-twentieth-century addition to international relations, constructivism explains events in international politics through a focus on norms and identities—both of individuals and of states. It has returned international relations scholars to foundational questions, including the nature of the state itself, how state interests are formed, and the nature of key concepts such as sovereignty. Yet, like liberalism and realism, constructivism is not a uniform theory. It is an overarching perspective with a set of core ideas that most constructivists share.

For constructivists, the objects of study in international relations should be the identities of actors, and the norms and practices of individuals and groups that stem from those identities. Ted Hopf offers a simple analogy that highlights the importance of understanding identities and norms:

The scenario is a fire in a theater where all run for the exits. Absent knowledge of social norms, even this seemingly overdetermined circumstance, the outcome is indeterminate. In a theater with just one door, while all run for that exit, who goes first? Are they the strongest or the disabled, the women

or the children, the aged or the infirm, or is it just a mad dash? Determining the outcome will require knowing more about the situation than just the distribution of material power or the structure of authority. One will need to know about the culture, norms, institutions, procedures, rules, and social practices that constitute the actors and the structure alike.15

Note that had realist logic been employed to predict the outcome of Hopf's fire-in-a-theater example, or, say, the demographic composition of the Titanic's lifeboats in 1912, the focus on one's own survival and self-interests, and on relative power, would have caused an incorrect prediction. In real life, the strong sometimes yield to the weak, rather than forcing the weak to "suffer what they must." That is why the Titanic's lifeboats were filled not with strong men, but with the ship's physically weaker passengers: women and children. The identities of the individuals, and the norms and practices that stem from those identities, are what influence their behavior.

The relationship between different identities is also an important facet of understanding international politics from the constructivist perspective. States' identities can be convergent, meaning that those states share similar characteristics and ideals, or they can be divergent, meaning that they do not share similar characteristics and ideals. This difference does not mean that states necessarily have interests and ideals that are opposed to one another, but they could. Understanding the relationship between different identities is of central importance in international politics today. For example, one of the main divides that has created a long-standing rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran stems from their divergent Sunni (Saudi Arabia) and Shia (Iran) Islamic identities. The meanings attached to these divergent identities can create a political divergence between the states themselves. For Iran, the Shia identity is one that is bound up with a revolutionary idea of religion and politics which it seeks to export outside its borders. Iran's Shia identity therefore creates interests that are fulfilled by regional meddling and which are threatening to Sunni interests. In contrast, Saudi Arabia embraces a conservative Sunni Islam which supports conservative Sunni

interests in the region. These divergent identities and the politics they generate are arguably part of the reason that Saudi Arabia and Iran support opposing sides of the Syrian conflict that began in 2011. Iran backs the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria, while Saudi Arabia supports rebel groups. In addition to Syria's inclusion in Iran's sphere of influence, Bashar al-Assad also practices a Shia branch of Islam, sharing that identity with Iran. The rebels supported by Saudi Arabia share their Sunni identity. Iran and Saudi Arabia politically and militarily support the actors in the conflict with which they share an identity and which align with their political interests in the region.

In addition to focusing attention on the role of norms and identities, constructivism offers the major theoretical proposition that neither objects nor concepts have any necessary, fixed, or objective meaning. Instead, their meanings are constructed through social interaction. For example, constructivists see sovereignty not as an absolute but rather as a contested concept. They point out that states have never had exclusive control over territory. State sovereignty has always been challenged, and is continuously being challenged by globalization, new institutional forms, and the development of new transitional problems that states must face. Constructivists argue that the idea of sovereignty still exists as a concept that governs state behavior only because when states interact, they do so in a way that treats themselves and other states as sovereign entities. State sovereignty is therefore a socially constructed facet of reality.

Identities are similarly socially constructed. State behavior thus depends not on the objective reality of a situation but on our subjective interpretation of that reality. An important part of that social construction of identities (and the resulting behavior) is our discourse. How we choose to talk about ourselves and others influences our interpretation of our respective identities, as well as others' interpretations of those identities. Therefore, in addition to how we act toward others, how we choose to talk about and frame our identities is important for understanding how those identities (and the resulting behavior) come to be formed. For example, a state

that is viewed and treated as aggressive by other states might begin to act more aggressively, making that interpretation of reality real. After the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, Iran engaged in cooperative relations with the United States to fight the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In 2002, however, President George W. Bush gave a speech labeling Iran part of the "axis of evil." Iran concluded that the United States was hostile toward it, and ceased cooperative activities in the war. Relations between them deteriorated to the point where, instead of assisting the United States, Iran even began to work against U.S. goals. According to constructivist logic, labeling and treating Iran as an enemy led it to pursue policies that coincided with that reality.

Constructivists argue that it is not only states' behaviors that are shaped by beliefs about themselves and others, but also states' very interests. For constructivists, states' interests are the result of their socially constructed identities. Moreover, those identities and interests are not fixed. They can change as experience, discourse, and practices change. This stands in contrast to realist and liberal approaches to the study of international relations, which view state interests as based on purely material factors.

For example, Germany and Japan had highly militaristic cultures and behavior leading into, and during, World War II. However, as Thomas Berger argues, the way their historical experiences during World War II have been interpreted and internalized by individuals at the domestic level has reshaped their national identities and interests.16 In particular, their identities have been reconstructed in such a way that they are averse to resorting to the use of force in their relations with other states. Understanding Germany's national identity can help explain why, despite its fears that it could no longer rely on the United States to deter Russian aggression, there was little to no public support in Germany for its acquisition of nuclear weapons when the issue of obtaining them was floated in 2017. Similarly, this identity change can help explain why there was strong opposition in the mid-2010s to a proposal to revise the Japanese constitution by removing Article 9, which

legally prohibits Japan from waging war or obtaining "war potential." Indeed, the argument that Japan's pacifist ideals are a foundation of their democracy has been widely cited by opponents of the change.

Overall, constructivists dispute the idea that material structures have a necessary, fixed, or inherent meaning. Alexander Wendt, one of the best-known constructivists, argues that, on its own, the political structure of the international system (that is, whether the distribution of power is unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar) cannot tell us much of interest. It does not predict whether two states will be friends or enemies, whether they will recognize each other's sovereignty, whether they will have revisionist or status quo ideals, and so on.17 It is the identities of states and the relationship between their identities, along with the norms that stem from those identities, that matter most.

Constructivists do align with realists and liberals in that they view power as important. However, whereas realists and liberals primarily see power in material terms (military, economic, or political), constructivists also see power in discursive terms—they focus on the power of ideas, culture, and language. In some constructivist theories, power rests in the ability to persuade when deliberating or arguing with others. Other theories invoke the idea of legitimacy as an important source of power. States may alter their actions so other members of the international community will view them as legitimate. These arguments about persuasion and legitimacy lead to the idea of soft power—the power of a state to attract states to change their behavior based on the legitimacy of its values or policies, rather than having to coerce them into doing so.18 In other words, the legitimacy of one state's actions can help it persuade others to adopt similar behavior. For example, the European Union has chosen to take the lead in addressing environmental issues like climate change, with the hope that their example will lead states outside the EU to follow suit.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESPolicy Perspectives: A View from India

Narendra Modi came into power in India in 2014. The policies that his government has adopted are policies whose characteristics might be highlighted by the three main IR perspectives. Which one likely best explains Modi's foreign policies?

Since coming into power in 2014, the government of Narendra Modi has adopted clear policy positions that reflect approaches from the various IR perspectives. First, the Modi government has endorsed a policy of nuclear deterrence. The policy is not one of first-strike use but based on the credibility of assured retaliation if a nuclear weapon is used against India. The government has therefore focused on building up the survivability and reliability of its nuclear arsenal, and demonstrating these capabilities to its adversaries, as evident in its regular testing of delivery systems. Such a strategy, the government believes, can strengthen its overall strategy of deterrence. This policy position is consistent with a defensive realist orientation.

However, with regard to Kashmir—one of India's most prominent security issues—the Modi government seems to take a policy stance more consistent with offensive realism. In August 2019, Modi announced the revocation of Kashmir's autonomy. Cell phone and Internet access was shut off in the region, and military troops were sent in to lock down the area in the expectation of potentially violent resistance. Kashmir has been in turmoil since, leading to clashes between security forces and residents. In March and April of 2020 alone, 50 people (including militants, armed forces, and civilians) were killed as a result of the conflict. The actions illustrate Modi's attempts to solidify India's power, a factor that would serve India well internationally.

Religious identity has also become an important factor in Modi's policies. In December 2019, the Modi government was able to pass the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and is pushing for a National Register of Citizens (NRC). Under the act, for the first time in India, religion was made a basis for

citizenship. The law specifically fast-tracks asylum claims for non-Muslim illegal immigrants from the neighboring Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It also allows them a path to citizenship. Combined with the NRC, the act would thus identify Muslims not on the register as illegal immigrants; non-Muslims not on the register would also be considered illegal but would be immunized by the Citizenship Act. As sociologist Niraja Gopal Jaya said, the Citizenship Act raises the "potential of transforming India into a majoritarian polity with gradations of citizenship rights."a Constructivists would point to the importance of identity underlying these policies.

But not all policies of the Modi government are confrontational in nature. In fact, it is pursuing a policy of cooperation and multilateralism in the area of maritime security that is more consistent with the liberal perspective. The scale and complexity of maritime security challenges India faces have increased in recent years. They stem from piracy and terrorism emanating from the seas to the changing balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, the militarization in the South China Sea, and the increasing number of naval platforms in the Indian Ocean. In response to these challenges, the Modi government has taken actions to further cooperate with its neighbors and island states in the Indian Ocean, with the belief that stability on the seas cannot be achieved by a single nation alone. It has supported multilateral initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, as well as working at the bilateral level with coastal states such as Kenya and Tanzania and island countries such as Seychelles, Maldives, and Sri Lanka—states that lack maritime military prowess and thus are vulnerable to the threats arising from the seas. Proactively engaging with these states, India has become a "formidable and reliable" maritime partner.b

Muslims across India protested the Citizenship Amendment Act, which made religion a basis for citizenship across India.

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These different policies reflect different perspectives from IR theory. Some of them focus on the use of force, while others focus on cooperation. Others focus on identity politics. Is Modi a realist? Or do you think his policies reflect that he has a more liberal approach? Or does he use more constructivist-oriented tactics?

FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Modi government's security policies differ widely. Some are focused on the active use of force, others focus on deterrence, and others focus on cooperation. How might a realist theorist try to explain India's overall foreign policy?

If you were a liberal, how could you justify the realist response?

If you were a constructivist, how might you argue that identity influences the Modi government's approach to Kashmir and its maritime policies?

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Constructivist theories also offer explanations of change that differ from those of realism and liberalism. Change can occur through diffusion of ideas or the internationalization of norms, as well as through socialization (the process through which one adopts the identities of peer groups). These explanations help us understand that ideas are spread both within a national setting and cross-nationally. This is how democracy is diffused, how ideas about human rights protection have been internationalized, and how states such as the new members of the European Union become socialized into the community's norms and practices. Put another way, realism and liberalism both have a more difficult time explaining the advent, spread, and real-world impact of ideas and norms such as taboos against land mines or the "responsibility to protect" (discussed in Chapter 10). Constructivist theories offer an answer.

Like realism and liberalism, however, constructivism has shortcomings. Until recently, constructivism remained mainly a powerful tool of criticism rather than an approach capable of explaining outcomes in the real world. This situation is changing, however. Throughout this book, examples of

constructivist scholarship will allow you to see this approach in use so that you can make your own judgments concerning this crucial and still relatively new theoretical perspective.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Constructivism

Key Actors

People, elites, cultures

Characteristics of Individuals

Key actors in creation of meaning; bound by education, socialization, and culture; their identities matter

Characteristics of States

Artifacts whose significance is socially constructed through discourse; their identities matter

Characteristics of the International System

An artifact whose significance is socially constructed through discourse; distribution of identities matters

Beliefs about Change

Possible through socialization, diffusion of ideas, or internationalization of norms

Major Theorists

Hopf, Wendt

Check Your Understanding

The central theoretical tenet of constructivism is international economic relations determine political relations.

neither state nor international community interests are predetermined or fixed.

human nature is inherently flawed and conflictual.

international institutions are the key to altering the behavior of political leaders.

Constructivists like Alexander Wendt argue that material structures, on their own, explain everything.

very little.

economic relationships between actors.

the relative strength of states.

Glossary

constructivism

an international relations theory that hypothesizes how ideas, norms, and institutions shape state identity and interests

discourse

how we choose to talk about ourselves and others

socialization

the process through which one adopts the identities of other groups

Endnotes

Note 15: Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” International Security 23:1 (Summer 1989): 172. Return to reference 15

Note 16: Thomas U. Berger, “Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan,” in The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 318. Return to reference 16

Note 17: Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” International Organization 46:2 (Spring 1992): 396. For a more complete analysis, see Alexander Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Return to reference 17

Note 18: Joseph S. Nye Jr., Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Return to reference 18

Note a: Quoted in “Citizenship Amendment Bill: India’s New ‘Anti-Muslim’ Law Explained,” BBC News, November 11,

2019, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50670393 (accessed 12/10/20). Return to reference a

Note b: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Special Report 191, "3 Years of the Modi Government," 2017, p. 18. Return to reference b

THE RADICAL PERSPECTIVE

While radicalism is not as prominent as other views are today, it offers another perspective on the study of international relations. Theories from this perspective place primacy on the role of economics in explaining international phenomena. This focus differs from that of the three main perspectives in international relations, which place the most importance on political interactions. Economics has a place in these perspectives, but it is not the main factor contributing to explanations of international politics. For realists, economic factors are one of the ingredients of power, one component of the international structure. For liberals, economic interdependence (and the role multinational corporations play in fostering that interdependence) is one possible explanation for international cooperation, but only one among many factors. In neither theory, though, is economics the determining factor. Both realists and liberals accept that the state is the primary unit of analysis. Constructivists do not focus solely on the state as the main actor in world politics, but their focus on identities and norms leads them more to political than economic explanations. For radicals, the factors that affect international politics are economic rather than political. They focus on the role of the economic system and actors such as economic classes and multinational corporations. Following this line of logic, two main schools of thought are the most pervasive in the radical perspective: Marxism and dependency theory.

Marxism

The writings of Karl Marx (1818–83) are fundamental to all radical thought, even though his theories did not directly address many contemporary issues. Marx based his theory of the evolution of capitalism on economic class conflict: he believed that the capitalism of nineteenth-century Europe

emerged out of the earlier feudal system. According to Marx, in the capitalist system, private interests control labor and market exchanges, creating bondages from which certain classes try to free themselves. For Marx, there are two main economic classes: a bourgeoisie—which owns the means of production—and a proletariat—exploited labor.19 Not only do radical theories seek to understand the relationship between those classes, but some have also applied Marxist ideas to help explain the relationship between states in the international system.

One important group of radical beliefs centers on the structure of the global system. That structure, according to Marxist thinking, is hierarchical and is largely the by-product of "imperialism," or the expansion of certain economic forms into other areas of the world. The British economist John A. Hobson (1858–1940) theorized that expansion occurs because of three conditions in the more developed states: overproduction of goods and services, underconsumption by workers and the lower class because of low wages, and oversaving by the upper class. Corporations are making goods that they need people to buy in order to sustain the corporations' economic well-being and the state's economy. However, workers cannot afford to buy these goods because of low wages, and the upper class is saving its money rather than buying goods. Corporations need to sell these good somewhere. To solve this problem, developed states have expanded abroad, and radicals argue that developed countries still see expansion as a solution. Goods find new markets in underdeveloped regions, workers' wages are kept low because of foreign competition, and savings are profitably invested in new markets rather than in improving the lot of the workers at home.20 Critically, for radicals, states intervene, but they do so on behalf of the bourgeoisie class rather than on behalf of the exploited workers. States are therefore part of the problem in keeping the lower class suppressed.

For radicals, imperialism produces a hierarchical international system, which offers opportunities to some states, organizations, and individuals, but imposes significant constraints on behavior for others. Techniques of domination

and suppression arise from the uneven economic distribution inherent in the capitalist system. This empowers and enables the dominant class and dominant states to exploit the others. The dynamics of capitalism and economic expansion make such exploitation necessary if the dominant actors are to maintain their position and the capitalist structure is to survive. Marxists and radicals view the economic techniques of domination and suppression as the means of power in the world.

Dependency Theory

Not all radical theorists, however, are Marxist. Dependency theory, whose development is closely associated with the work of economists such as Raúl Prebisch (1901–86) and Aníbal Pinto (1919–96), is a key strand of the radical school of thought. It differs from Marxism in that Marxist theories of imperialism explain the expansion of dominant states while dependency theory focuses on explaining the underdevelopment of the dominated states. Marxist theories explain the reasons for dominant state expansion (imperialism), while dependency theory focuses on the consequences of that expansion within the states where it has occurred.

There are a variety of theories within the dependency theory school of thought, but they are united by several core arguments.21 First, just as Marx saw society as comprising two separate economic classes, dependency theorists see the international system as comprising two sets of states: those that are dominant and those that are dependent. The advanced industrial countries are the dominant states, while the dependent states are the developing countries that are dependent on the exports of primary products (commodities) to the developed states for their income.

Second, dependency theorists assume that external forces such as multinational corporations are central to the economic activities within dependent states. However, multinational corporations are controlled by the dominant states, which use them to represent their own economic interests in the dependent countries. Multinational corporations are thus key

players in establishing and maintaining dependency relationships. For dependency theorists, they are not benign actors, as liberals would characterize them, or marginal actors, as realists would. Multinational corporations are agents through which dominant states can exploit dependent states and their workers.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Radicalism

Marxism

Dependency Theory

Key Actors

Social classes (upper-class bourgeoisie and lower-class proletariat); multinational corporations; emphasis on economics

Dominant and dominated states; multinational corporations; emphasis on economics

Characteristics of States

States act on behalf of the bourgeoisie class

Advanced industrialized countries dominate developing countries

Characteristics of the International System

Hierarchical; by-product of the expansion of certain economic forms into other areas of the world

Hierarchical; controlled by dominant states

Result of Current Situation

Imperialism

Underdevelopment in the dominated states

Major Theorists

Marx, Hobson

Prebisch, Pinto

Third, dependency theorists argue that the relationship between dominant and dependent states is dynamic. Their interactions reinforce each other. Dependent states supply the dominant states with cheap primary products. The dominant countries and their multinational corporations use those primary products to manufacture goods (either in their own country or by exploiting the cheap labor in dependent countries) and then sell those goods to the dependent states. These goods are always more expensive than the primary products used to create them. Dependent countries can therefore never earn enough from their exports to rise out of their impoverished state. This spiral continues and, over time, intensifies states' unequal positions in the international system. Dependency theorists argue that this is a central reason for underdevelopment in many areas of the world.

Overall, because they focus mostly on economic factors, radical theories are less helpful for explaining more political phenomena in international politics. In the realm of economics, however, they do have some conceptual ideas to offer. The chapters that follow therefore do not focus on radical theories, but they are discussed in Chapter 8 on international political economy. Because of its contributions in economics, the radical perspective is important to at least consider, even if it is not one of the mainstream perspectives.

Check Your Understanding

Radicalism focuses on _____ to explain state behavior.
social class conflict

economic class conflict

political class conflict

all class conflicts

Dependency theorists attribute primary importance to the role of _____ in exerting control over developing states.
armies

local political elites

multinational corporations

private military contractors

Glossary

radicalism

a social theory, formulated by Karl Marx and modified by other theorists, that posits that class conflict between owners and workers will cause the eventual demise of capitalism; offers a critique of capitalism

dependency theory

a strand of the radical school of economic thought that seeks to explain the underdevelopment of dominated states

Endnotes

Note 19: Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Random House, 1977). Return to reference 19

Note 20: John A. Hobson, Imperialism: A Study, ed. Philip Siegelman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965). Return to reference 20

Note 21: Vincent Ferraro, “Dependency Theory: An Introduction,” in The Development Economics Reader, ed. Giorgio Secondi (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 58–64. Return to reference 21

FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF IR THEORY

To some IR scholars, feminism represents yet another IR theory. But to most theorists, feminism offers a variety of illuminating critiques of the mainstream perspectives. Many of the critiques share core propositions. Chief among them is the proposition that the world would be a better place—more just, more peaceful, more prosperous—if women had more opporunities to define, describe, and lead in domestic and international affairs. Thus, both realist and liberal feminists argue for greater participation of women in national and international decision making, and in economic life. Liberal feminists, for example, call for developing organizational policies that affect women, especially the role of women in economic development, women as victims of crime and discrimination, and women in situations of armed conflict. For too long, states have neglected these issues.

Radical feminists critique international relations theories as well. Unlike other radicals, who point to the structure of the international economic system as determinant of international relations, radical feminists define the problem as overarching patriarchy. The patriarchal system permeates national and international systems. For example, engaging in war seems desirable or rational. Until this system is changed, war will always be more likely, and women will always be in a subservient position—the victims of a neoliberal capitalist model of economic governance, in which poor women are exposed to the ravages of global competition.

Violence against women during conflict often has tremendous costs that are difficult to calculate. Here, women protest war crimes committed against women by Serbian nationals during the conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Croatia.

*

Feminist critics are also found among social constructivists and other alternative theorists. To these feminists, studying gender involves more than just counting women in elite positions or cataloging programs targeting women. Just as constructivists assert more broadly, the meaning of things is established, supported, and changed through a process of social interaction, namely discourse.

According to J. Ann Tickner, for example, classical realism is based on a very limited—indeed, masculine—notion of both human nature and power. She argues that human nature is not fixed and unalterable; it is multidimensional and contextual. Power cannot be equated exclusively with physical control and domination. Tickner thinks that all international relations theory must be reoriented toward a more inclusive notion of power, in which power is the ability to act in concert (not just in conflict) or to engage in a symbiotic relationship (instead of outright competition). In other words, power can also be a concept of connection rather than one of only autonomy.22

For Tickner, as well as many other feminist scholars, such as Cynthia Enloe and Christine Sylvester, discourse has been dominated by a narrowly male perspective. This domination affects not only the issues IR theorists and policy makers

consider important, but also the very standards by which a given policy is thought to be effective or ineffective. For example, if we want to understand violent conflict in terms of intensity, we may think that the number of combatants killed constitutes a sound measure of how important a given conflict is. Yet feminist IR scholars have pointed to rape as a serious cost of conflict that does not often result in a physical death. By privileging deaths in conflict over rape, we discount the true costs and consequences of a violent conflict such as a civil or interstate war. Paying little attention to the voices of women affects the kinds of questions we ask and the way we evaluate the answers.

Tickner has also pointed to the masculinization of many aims of foreign policy. For example, to the extent males tend to frame problems as dichotomous, gender suggests a hierarchy of associations that often lead states to give unwarranted or counterproductive priority to armed conflict as the core meaning of "security." Some countries are "feminine" or "childlike," and therefore in need of guidance or discipline from "masculine" or "grown-up" states (e.g., Britain or Germany). This situation creates incentives to intervene (rescue fantasies) and, at the same time, channels the forms of "effective" intervention to military force at the high (masculine) end, and diplomatic or economic intervention at the low (feminine) end.

Other feminists, such as Cynthia Enloe, have argued that contrary to Tickner's assertion that women have been absent from international politics, they have in fact been key participants.23 The problem, according to Enloe, is that their participation goes almost entirely unnoticed (and, she might add, unrewarded). Enloe calls attention to the ways that the domestic roles for women condition our understanding of their potential as leaders and agenda-setters in international politics.

Even today, we see a strong gap between women's potential and women's visible participation and leadership in international politics as compared to men's. Perhaps, then, the strongest argument is that the core values of justice, peace, and prosperity, which both sexes share, cannot help but be advanced by the active participation and leadership of more

women. And international relations theories can benefit from the various critiques that feminists of all theoretical persuasions offer.

Check Your Understanding

Some feminist theorists argue that classical realism is the best theory to explain international relations.

women have been absent from international politics.

the structure of the economic system is the key determinant of international relations.

women are the most important actors in international relations.

Endnotes

Note 22: J. Ann Tickner, “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation,” Millennium: Journal of International Studies 17:3 (1988): 429–40. Return to reference 22

Note 23: Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Return to reference 23

THEORY IN ACTION: ANALYZING THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT (2014 AND BEYOND)

The contending theoretical perspectives discussed in the preceding sections see the world, and even specific events, quite differently. What theorists and policy makers choose to see, what they each seek to explain, and what implications they draw vary widely, even though the facts of an event remain the same. Applying arguments from the three main perspectives (realism, liberalism, and constructivism) to the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine that began in early 2014 allows us to compare and contrast these perspectives in action.

Background on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

In order to analyze the 2014 Russia-Ukraine conflict, we must understand the background of the case. In 1999 and in 2004, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expanded

east, moving ever closer to Russia's border and bringing in states that had previously been part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Russia opposed these NATO expansions from the start but was in a weak position to stop them. In 2008, NATO issued a statement in support of Georgia's and Ukraine's aspirations to join. Russian president Putin believed that the possibility of admitting Georgia and Ukraine, which share fairly expansive borders with Russia, was a "direct threat" to Russia.24

In addition to this potential NATO expansion, the European Union proposed a plan in May 2008 for an Eastern Partnership initiative to begin to integrate countries such as Ukraine into the EU economy. Russian leaders also viewed this move as hostile to their interests. The Russian foreign minister accused the EU of trying to create a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe. The initiative, however, was strongly supported by Ukraine and its leaders at the time.

The domestic situation in Russia contributed in important ways in the lead-up to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In late 2011 and early 2012, tens of thousands protested in Moscow over what was considered fraud in the 2011 Russian legislative elections, as well as Putin's decision to run for a third presidential term. Violence broke out and some opposition leaders were arrested. By the end of 2013, the opposition movement had collapsed, and Putin began a campaign of geopolitical actions and propaganda that some dubbed "make Russia great again."25 The goal was to strengthen the people's Russian patriotism, and thus build up popular support.

Domestic politics in Ukraine, characterized by tensions between pro-Western and pro-Russian groups, also became very important. In November 2013, the pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, chose to terminate the plans to sign the political association and trade agreement with the EU. The result was immediate pro-Western protests in Ukraine's capital, which quickly grew into a large movement. The protesters urged Yanukovych to sign the deal with the EU, but he began to expand ties with Russia instead.

In February 2014, the Ukrainian protesters succeeded in overthrowing Yanukovych. The new government they put in place was strongly pro-Western. This new government was viewed by Putin (and those of Russian descent living in Ukraine) as another example of the West's encroachment into Russia's sphere of influence.

The fears of pro-Russian Ukrainians were realized when one of the first actions the new government took was to ban Russian as the second official language of Ukraine. In response, pro-Russian protests broke out in Crimea, an important area in Russian-Ukrainian relations. Crimea was a republic of Ukraine when the conflict began, but it had been part of Russia (and subsequently the Soviet Union) from 1783 until 1954. In 1954, it was handed over to Ukraine, which was then one of the Soviet republics. Many people in Crimea are therefore Russian speaking and of Russian descent. Crimea was thus a central area where people resented the anti-Russian sentiments of the new government.

The pro-Russian protesters in Crimea seized government buildings and other strategic sites. Pushed in part by Russian propaganda, they demanded that Crimea secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia. Soon after, Russia's parliament voted to approve Putin's request to use force against Ukraine to protect Russian interests. Thousands of Russian soldiers then moved onto the Crimean Peninsula. On March 16, Crimea held a referendum in which the people voted to secede from Ukraine (many in the West argued that the vote was fraudulent), and Crimea was annexed by Russia two days later. In response to the Russian actions, the United States, the European Union, and several European countries outside the EU imposed sanctions on Russia.

Continuing the "make Russia great again" campaign, state-controlled media in Russia immediately began to vilify the West and to hail the "return" of Crimea to Russia as one of the greatest moments in Russian history since the defeat of the Nazis in World War II. The citizens of Russia responded with patriotic pride, and polls showed a significant "rally around the flag" effect.

By mid-2017, Russia still had a significant military presence in Crimea and was actively practicing military exercises close to Ukraine's border. Skirmishes between Ukrainian and Russian troops were regularly breaking out, and Russia was beginning to support Russian rebel groups in other areas of Ukraine in their fight against the Ukrainian government.

On July 27, 2020, Ukraine and Russian-backed forces signed a ceasefire agreement—one of over 20 ceasefires that had been agreed upon before. It broke down in 2021 with the buildup of Russian troops and weaponry at the East Ukraine border. Armed provocations resulted in the deaths of Ukrainian soldiers. The Biden administration and European allies voiced commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and have imposed a variety of sanctions in the hopes of deterring Russian aggression.

So why did all this happen? The three major perspectives in international relations can help us understand, though as you will see, they interpret these events in very different ways.

Pro-Western and pro-Russian divides in the Crimean Peninsula have led to sharp conflicts. Although some cities in Crimea have aligned with Russia (such as Sevastopol, pictured here), others remain in opposition to Putin's increasing nationalistic pressure.

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Realist Perspective

Realist interpretations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict would focus on the security interests of the states involved, as well as the distribution of power between them. Leading up to the outbreak of the conflict, Russia clearly felt the intrusion of the West into its sphere of influence. The growing Western influence in Ukraine is exemplified by its aspiration of joining NATO, its possible trade agreement with the EU, and the pro-West government that took over in Ukraine just weeks before Russian troops moved into Crimea and annexed it.

As realists argue, security is a zero-sum game. A relative gain for one side is a loss for the other. The intrusion of the West into Eastern Europe, and the movement of Ukraine farther

toward the West, was thus a direct security threat to Russia, shifting the distribution of power in the region toward the United States and the EU. The security threat to Russia is further illustrated by the fact that NATO, one of the institutions actively building connections with Ukraine, is a military alliance specifically designed to counter outside states such as Russia.

Following realist logic, Russia's actions were designed to prevent the encroachment of the United States and the EU into its own sphere of influence, which would shift the distribution of power toward the West, and thus threaten Russia's security. Russia directly subverted Ukraine's move toward the West by proposing a counteroffer that led the Ukrainian president to reject the agreement between Ukraine and the EU. Russia also worked to weaken and destabilize Ukraine, preventing it from becoming a power that the West could use against Russia. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia supported pro-Russian groups that were fighting the Ukrainian government within the country, and it established a military presence and began to conduct military exercises at the border with Ukraine. Russia took actions that it saw as necessary steps to protect its security, including the 2021 military buildup along the border.

An offensive realist would also highlight the fact that Russia's military actions relating to Ukraine helped further its reputation regarding its willingness to engage in conflict. The creation of such a reputation is demonstrated by fears in Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states that the same type of action taken by Russia in Crimea might occur in their own states. All were once either part of Russia (or the Soviet Union) or in its sphere of influence. In addition, like Crimea, several of these countries have fairly significant Russian-speaking populations. Not only has Russia clearly created a reputation for a willingness to engage in conquest, but a bandwagoning effect by some states resulting from this reputation might even be evident. For example, shortly after the annexation of Crimea, Russia also began to increase its military power in the Black Sea. Rather than work to balance against Russia, however, Turkey increased both military and economic cooperation with it. Turkey and Russia signed a gas

pipeline deal, pledged to increase bilateral trade more than fivefold, brokered a ceasefire in Aleppo, and agreed on a plan to stop the fighting in the rest of Syria. Demonstrating a willingness to engage in conquest can, according to offensive realists, pay off.

Liberal Perspective

Liberal interpretations of the Russia-Ukraine situation would focus on characteristics of the states and the domestic politics at work within them, as well as the role that international institutions have played in influencing the conflict.

A theorist arguing from the liberal perspective would counter the realist argument by emphasizing that states are not unitary actors. Domestic actors and the preferences of those domestic actors are important factors in international politics, and examining them can help us understand the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Under the power of Viktor Yanukovych, the pro-Russian president of Ukraine who came to power in 2010, Ukraine was not seen by Russia as much of a threat. In fact, Russia actively pursued cooperative relations with Ukraine, offering to buy up Ukrainian debt and lower the price of gas exports to Ukraine. The pro-Russian preferences that were represented by the Yanukovych government, as evidenced by the fact that it cut off the EU agreement and accepted Russia's cooperative offer, meant that Ukraine was not much of a threat at the time.

It was when a government supporting pro-Western domestic actors came to power in February 2014 that Russia came to view Ukraine as a threat. The government of Ukraine now represented pro-Western rather than pro-Russian preferences. The new Ukrainian government was thus likely to actively pursue connections with the West, bringing Ukraine closer to the Western (rather than the Russian) sphere of influence. The pro-Western protesters' demand that the Yanukovych government sign the EU association agreement is evidence that these actors desired to engage in these types of relations. According to this liberal argument, it was fear of the actions that the pro-Western government would take that led Russia to work to destabilize the country by mobilizing pro-Russian

domestic actors in Crimea, and the same fear led Russia to continue to support pro-Russian rebel groups in eastern Ukraine after Crimea's annexation.

Other liberal arguments would highlight the important role that international institutions played—both international organizations like NATO and the EU and treaties like the association agreement Ukraine sought to forge with the EU. In particular, Russia associated the threat that stemmed from the pro-Western groups within Ukraine with their attempts to align their interests and actions with the EU and NATO. If these institutions had not been key actors in international relations, Ukraine's alignment with them would probably not have been seen as a threat by Russia and pro-Russian groups within Ukraine. But, according to liberal theorists, international institutions play a key role in fostering interdependence and influencing state behavior. Joining NATO and forging an association agreement (which included important trade provisions) with the EU would link Ukraine with the West in ways that could not be achieved without these institutions. Joining NATO would align the West's security interests with those of Ukraine—creating a threat to the security interests of Russia. The association agreement designed to facilitate trade between Ukraine and the EU would increase the interdependence between these countries, and in doing so, lessen Ukraine's trade dependence on Russia—creating a threat to the economic interests of Russia. In other words, because of the important role international institutions play in creating connections between states, Ukraine's attempts to join these institutions were an important factor influencing the threat felt by Russia.

Constructivist Perspective

Constructivist interpretations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict would focus on the importance of the identities of the states involved, as well as the social constructions that came to define them. Identities come into play in several important ways.

First, the encroachment of the West into the Russian sphere of influence is not, in and of itself, a threat to Russian interests.

The threat is made real because the states involved have divergent identities—the pro-democracy identity of the West and the more autocratic identity of Russia under Putin's leadership. The importance of these divergent identities can be seen in the fact that prior to 2013, Western states had begun to work to spread democratic values to post-Soviet eastern European states such as Ukraine. It is estimated that the United States has spent over $5 billion supporting organizations aimed at promoting democratic civil society, as well as supporting opposition groups against pro-Russian president Yanukovych after his election in 2010. This "social engineering" was seen as a threat to the leaders of Russia. This argument is backed up by this statement by the president of the nonprofit organization National Endowment for Democracy: "Ukraine's choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents… . Russians too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."26

Second, identities come into play in the way Putin used discourse to stimulate a patriotic Russian identity among the people who had previously been opposing him. The "make Russia great again" campaign was an effort to secure popular support at home. It shaped the identity of Russians in a way that led them to view Crimea as an important part of their history and identity. The annexation of Crimea mobilized this identity and led to a significant increase in popular support for Putin. Putin's need to secure support, and his efforts to construct Russian identity in specific ways, played a key role in his choice to annex Crimea and the effects that it had.

Overall, the realist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives provide very different explanations for the conflict that broke out between Russia and Ukraine in 2014. While the facts of the case are the same, the factors that each perspective highlights are different. None of the theorists associated with these perspectives are necessarily right or wrong; their explanations are simply more or less convincing. Which perspective's theories do you think best help us understand the outbreak of the conflict?

Check Your Understanding

Which theoretical perspective would most likely point to the tension between the pro-democracy identity of the West and the more autocratic leanings of Putin's Russia as a key cause of the Russia-Ukraine conflict? realism

liberalism

constructivism

neorealism

Endnotes

Note 24: John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," Foreign Affairs 93:5 (September/October 2014): 77–93. For a more extensive analysis of Russia's treatment of its neighbors, see Gerard Toal, Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Return to reference 24

Note 25: Sophie Pinkham, "How Annexing Crimea Allowed Putin to Claim He Had Made Russia Great Again," Guardian, March 22, 2017. Return to reference 25

Note 26: Carl Gershman, quoted in Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault." Return to reference 26

IN SUM: SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THEORETICAL LENSES

Without theory, we are reduced to educated guesses on how to resolve crises or advance human values such as justice and peace. How each of us sees international relations depends on our own theoretical lens. Do you see events through a realist framework? Are you inclined toward a liberal interpretation? Do you adhere to a constructivist view of the world? These theoretical perspectives differ not only in who they identify as key actors, but also in what counts as a threat or a benefit. They also differ in their views about the relative explanatory power that stems from considering individual actors, states, and the international system in the study of international politics. Better understanding these three "levels of analysis" is the focus of the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

Choose a current event in world politics. Describe and explain that event using the three main theoretical perspectives.

A realist and a liberal are discussing the role of domestic politics in influencing international outcomes. Re-create that conversation, highlighting the differing perspectives.

Constructivists assert that the power of norms and ideas is continuously shaping and reshaping state behavior. Select a political idea—equality, democracy, or human rights. How has that idea changed over time? How has state behavior changed, if at all?

What feminist critique of international relations theory do you find the most convincing? Why?

What theoretical perspective best helps you explain the relationship between Venezuela and Turkey introduced at the beginning of the chapter?

Key Terms

anarchy (p. 71)

balancing (p. 71)

bandwagoning (p. 75) collective security (p. 79) complex interdependence (p. 80) constructivism (p. 83) dependency theory (p. 90) discourse (p. 84)

external balancing (p. 73) hypotheses (p. 67)

identity (p. 70)

internal balancing (p. 73) international institutions (p. 69) liberalism (p. 77)

multinational corporations (MNCs) (p. 69) national interest (p. 71) neoliberal institutionalism (p. 79) neorealism (p. 75)

norms (p. 70)

radicalism (p. 89)

rational actors (p. 71) realism (p. 71)

relative gains (p. 72) security dilemma (p. 73) socialization (p. 88) theoretical perspectives (p. 68) theory (p. 66)

Glossary

anarchy

the fact that there exists no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws, resolve disputes, or enforce law and order in the system

balancing

taking actions to offset the power of more powerful states

bandwagoning

a process in which states that might have opposed a threatening state choose to ally with it instead

collective security

the idea that aggression by a state should be defeated collectively because aggression against one state is aggression against all

complex interdependence

states are connected through multiple channels (both formal and informal), there is no hierarchy of issues, and the result is a decline in the use of military force

constructivism

an international relations theory that hypothesizes how ideas, norms, and institutions shape state identity and interests

dependency theory

a strand of the radical school of economic thought that seeks to explain the underdevelopment of dominated states

discourse

how we choose to talk about ourselves and others

external balancing

allying with other states to offset the power of more powerful states

hypotheses

specific falsifiable statements that question the proposed relationship among two or more concepts

identity

a sense of self based on certain qualities and beliefs that define a person or group

internal balancing

a state building up its own military resources and capabilities in order to be able to stand against more powerful states

international institutions

sets of rules such as international treaties and organizations meant to govern international behavior

liberalism

the theoretical perspective based on the assumption of the innate goodness of the individual and the value of political institutions in promoting social progress

multinational corporations (MNCs)

private enterprises which span state borders through the actual presence in, investments in, or trade with other countries

national interest

the interest of the state, most basically the protection of territory and sovereignty; in realist thinking, the interest is a unitary one defined in terms of the pursuit of power; in liberal thinking, there are many national interests; in radical thinking, it is the interest of a ruling elite

neoliberal institutionalism

a reinterpretation of liberalism that posits that even in an anarchic international system, states will cooperate because of their continuous interactions with each other and because it is in their self-interest to do so; institutions provide the framework for cooperative interactions

neorealism

a reinterpretation of realism that posits that the structure of the international system is the most important level to study; states

behave the way they do because of the structure of the international system; includes the belief that general laws can be found to explain events

norms

collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity

radicalism

a social theory, formulated by Karl Marx and modified by other theorists, that posits that class conflict between owners and workers will cause the eventual demise of capitalism; offers a critique of capitalism

rational actors

actors that make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of various options against the goal to be achieved

realism

a theory of international relations that emphasizes states' interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world; based on the notion that individuals are power seeking and that states act in pursuit of their own national interest defined in terms of power

relative gains

how much more one state gains over another

security dilemma

the situation in which each state tries to increase its own power to protect itself, but this increased power is seen as a threat by other states, leading them to be more insecure and thus to seek to increase their own power which, in turn, makes others more insecure

socialization

the process through which one adopts the identities of other groups

theoretical perspectives

sets of theories united by some common themes such as actors, concepts, and issues

theory

a collection of propositions that combine to explain phenomena by specifying the relationships among a set of concepts

4

Levels of Analysis

*

Despite the attack on the Abqaiq oil refining facility in Saudi Arabia in 2019, the tension between historic adversaries Saudi Arabia and Iran appears to have softened. How can the dynamics of the international system, states, and individuals shed light on why relations may have tempered between the two nations?

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran has long been characterized by a bitter and confrontational rivalry—a Sunni-Shia rivalry, as well as a rivalry for hegemony in the region. In 2019, however, those relations seemed to have taken a slight turn for the better. Despite a coordinated attack on Saudi oil installations that had occurred just weeks earlier, indirect talks mediated by Iraqi and Pakistani officials took place between Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, and Iranian officials. The crown prince softened his position toward the Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen and began to soften the Saudi blockade on Qatar, which Iran has opposed. While the distrust remains intense between the two countries, even a slight warming could have far-reaching implications, as their rivalry fuels political conflicts throughout the Middle East including in Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria. Why did we begin to see some potential change in the relations between these two countries?

Observers put forth several arguments about why this change might have come about. Some cite the fact that following the attacks on the Saudi oil processing plants, which Saudi Arabia and the United States both believe were carried out by Iran,

the United States responded with strong rhetoric but little action, breaking from the decades-old understanding that the United States would defend Saudi Arabia from foreign attacks.1 Saudi Arabia, with significantly fewer military capabilities, might not be able to balance Iran alone. Others cite the desire to preserve Saudi Arabia's position as a powerful leader in the region. Still others cite the crown prince's own changed position—the realization that his policies in Yemen and Qatar had not produced the desired results of undermining Iran's power. His own realization of this, and his own changed position, led to a change in Saudi Arabia's approach toward Iran and the region, more broadly.

The three explanations for why relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran might be improving point to three key factors. Is it the distribution of power between the states in the system? Is it the relationship between the states themselves? Or is it the individuals that matter most? All three highlight a different "level" at which we can analyze international politics. Like the theoretical perspectives, none are necessarily right or wrong. They simply highlight different ways to approach the analysis. In this chapter, we look at these different "levels of analysis" to understand how each can help us better understand international politics.

*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain how the various theoretical perspectives view the international system, the state, and the individual as levels of explanation for international events.

Understand the legal requirements for an entity to be a state and the politics behind the application of that definition.

Describe how each of the contending theoretical perspectives explains change in the international system.

Analyze what psychological factors have an impact on elite foreign policy decision making.

Detail how the different levels of analysis can be used to analyze the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

*

In Chapter 3, we introduced different perspectives through which international relations theorists study world politics. These theoretical perspectives not only differ in whom they identify as key actors and what counts as a threat or a benefit, but they also differ in their views about the relative explanatory power of three levels of analysis: the international system, the state, and the individual. Dividing the analysis of international politics into levels helps orient our questions and suggests the appropriate type of evidence to explore. Paying attention to levels of analysis helps us make logical deductions and enables us to explore all categories of explanation.

Kenneth Waltz, for example, introduced three different sources of explanations for why there is war. If the international system level is the focus, then the explanation rests with the characteristics of that system (such as the distribution of power) or with international and regional organizations and their relative strengths and weaknesses. If the state level, or domestic factors, is the focus, then the explanation is derived from characteristics of the state: the type of government (e.g., democratic or authoritarian), the type of economic system (e.g., capitalist or socialist), interest groups within the country, and/or the national interest. If the focus is on the individual level, then the personality, perceptions, choices, and activities of individual decision makers and individual participants provide the explanation.2

In this chapter, we examine in more detail how the international relations perspectives see the international system, the state, and the individual and how using these different levels of analysis can help us better understand international politics (see Figure 4.1). We can approach the study of international relations not only by looking through the lenses of the various perspectives but also by highlighting explanatory factors that occur at the different levels of analysis.

FIGURE 4.1

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

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Glossary

levels of analysis

analytical framework based on the ideas that events in international relations can be explained by looking at individuals, states, or the international system and that causes at each level can be separated from causes at other levels

Endnotes

Note 01: David D. Kirkpatrick and Ben Hubbard, “Attack on Saudi Oil Facilities Tests U.S. Guarantee to Defend Gulf,” New York Times, September 19, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/world/middleeast/saudi-iran-attack-oil.html (accessed 12/10/20). Return to reference 1

Note 02: Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State, and War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954). The idea was further developed in J. David Singer, “The Levels of Analysis Problem,” in International Politics and Foreign Policy, ed. James N. Rosenau, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1961), pp. 20–29. Return to reference 2

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

To understand the international system, we must first clarify the notion of a system itself. Broadly defined, a system is an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction. The concept of systems is essential to the physical and biological sciences; systems are composed of different interacting units, whether at the micro (cell, plant, animal) or the macro (natural ecosystem or global climate) level. Because these units interact, a change in one unit causes changes in the others. With their interacting parts, systems tend to respond in regularized ways; their actions have patterns. A system can break down when changes within it become so significant that, in effect, a new system emerges. The international system, composed of states as interacting units, can be conceptualized in the same way.

Each of the contending theoretical perspectives examined in Chapter 3 describes an international system. For realists, the

concept of an international system is vital to their analyses, whereas for liberals—who focus much more of their analyses on key characteristics of states—the international system is less consequential. For constructivists, the concept of an international system is derived from shared norms, ideas, and discourse.

Realism and the International System

Realists have clear notions about the international system and its essential characteristics. All realists characterize the international system as anarchic. Its key feature is that states are all sovereign (meaning that they have independent control over themselves and their decisions, and no other entities may intervene in their affairs) and, in this sense, equal. For realists, this anarchic structure has critical implications for the possibility of enduring peace among states. Realists argue that states should constantly seek power because, in an anarchic system, the only true guarantee of security must come from self-help. In addition, the power to conquer is the most relevant power. In doing so, states will inevitably come into conflict, whether their aim is simply self-preservation or, alternatively, the conquest of others.

To characterize the possibilities of war and peace in the international system, realists rely on the concept of polarity. System polarity describes the distribution of capabilities among states in the international system by counting the number of "poles" (states or groups of states) where material power is concentrated. There are three types of system polarity: multipolarity, bipolarity, and unipolarity (see Figure 4.2).

A multipolar system is any system in which the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in more than two states. In the system preceding World War I, five states—Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, France, and Austria-Hungary—composed a multipolar system that had evolved from the balance of power after the Napoleonic Wars.

FIGURE 4.2

Polarity in the International System

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In a stable multipolar system—a balance-of-power system—the implicit rules guiding interactions are clear to each of the state actors: rules of competition, cooperation, and shifting alliances. In systems in which these rules are understood and observed, alliances are formed for a specific purpose, have a short duration, and shift according to advantage rather than ideology. Any wars that do erupt are expected to be limited in nature, designed to preserve a balance of power. When an essential actor ignores the understood rules, the system may become unstable.

Bipolar systems are those in which the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in two states or coalitions of states. In the bipolar system of the Cold War, each of the blocs (the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO) sought to negotiate rather than fight, and to fight proxy wars outside of Europe rather than major wars among themselves. In a bipolar system, alliances tend to be longer term, based on relatively permanent interests, not shifting ones. Unlike in a multipolar system, each bloc in a bipolar system is certain about the direction and magnitude of its biggest threat. During much of the Cold War era, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, the international system was bipolar—the United States and its European and Asian allies (NATO, and Japan, South Korea, South Vietnam [until 1975], the Philippines, and Australia) faced the Soviet Union and its European and Asian allies (the Warsaw Pact, and the People's Republic of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam; and after 1962, Cuba). But over the course of the Cold War, the relative tightness or looseness of the bipolar system shifted, as powerful states such as the People's Republic of China, India, and France pursued independent paths.

A unipolar system is one in which the power to conquer all other states in the system combined resides within a single state. Realists disagree about whether the world has actually seen a true unipolar system (which, if it were to happen, would do away with anarchy and its interstate conflict implications). But immediately after the Gulf War in 1991, many states, including the United States' closest allies and virtually all

developing states, grew concerned that the international system had become unipolar. After all, the United States' chief rival bloc—the USSR and Warsaw Pact—had collapsed, U.S. defense expenditures were greater than those of the next 15 states combined, and its economy was three times stronger than the next three economies combined.

Today, there is little debate about whether the United States still commands significant material capabilities, but there is much discussion that the U.S. position in the system has declined in the twenty-first century. The United States still spends more on the military than its seven closest rivals combined, but U.S. power in relative terms is dwindling, as China, the European Union, Brazil, and India are rising economically. China has been expanding and modernizing its nuclear arsenal, as have Pakistan, India, Russia, and North Korea. The trend clearly suggests that the global distribution of material power is widening and illiberal states are becoming competitive on economic and human rights issues. This has led many commentators to suggest the waning, or the actual end, of U.S. hegemony. "The unipolar moment has passed, and it isn't coming back."3 But not all commentators agree with this assessment. Thus, the question of the polarity of the system in the world today remains.

The type of international system in place at any given time has implications for system management and stability. Are certain polarities more manageable and hence more stable than others are? Are wars more likely to occur in bipolar systems, multipolar systems, or unipolar systems? These questions have dominated much of the discussion among realists, but so far, studies of these relationships have been inconclusive.

Bipolar systems are very difficult to regulate formally, because neither uncommitted states nor international organizations can reliably direct the behavior of either of the two poles. Informal regulation may be easier. If either of the blocs is engaged in disruptive behavior, the consequences are immediately evident, especially if one of the blocs gains in strength or position as a result.

The neorealist theorist Kenneth Waltz argues that because of this visibility, the bipolar international system is the most stable structure in the long run: the two sides are "able both to moderate the other's use of violence and to absorb possibly destabilizing changes that emanate from uses of violence that they do not or cannot control."4 In such a system, a clear difference exists in how much power each pole holds compared with what other state actors hold. Because of the power disparity, each of the two poles can focus its activity almost exclusively on the other. Each can anticipate the other's actions and accurately predict its responses because of their history of repeated interactions. Each pole tries to preserve this balance of power to preserve itself and the nature of the system. In 2012, Waltz reprised a similar argument in "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb." He argues that Israel's nuclear capability is destabilizing the region: "If Iran goes nuclear, Israel and Iran will deter each other, as nuclear powers always have." That would bring stability.5

Multipolar systems can also be balance-of-power systems. According to some realists, multipolar systems can be very stable so long as the system's key actors internalize the rules of competition and cooperation. For neorealists, however, balance of power is more difficult in multipolar systems because they involve more inherent uncertainty about where and when a threat might emerge (including the threat of a given state's ignoring balance-of-power rules). For this reason, neorealists argue that bipolar systems are likely to be more peaceful. Again, the empirical evidence is mixed.

In contrast, hegemonic stability theorists claim that an approximation of unipolarity—though not absolute hegemony—may be sufficient to create and maintain a stable international system. So long as the hegemon—a term referring to the most powerful state in the system, coming from the Greek word "to lead"—is able and willing to lead, acting in ways that benefit those it leads as well as itself, enduring and prosperous peace can result. Some theorists, such as Robert O. Keohane, contend that hegemonic states are willing to pay the price of adopting and enforcing policies, unilaterally if necessary, to ensure the continuation of the

system that benefits them. They create rules and institutions in various issue areas to help guide states' behavior.6 In The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, historian Paul Kennedy argues that the hegemony of Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the immediate post–World War II era led to the greatest stability.7 When the hegemon loses material capability or is no longer willing to exercise its advantage in relative power to provide benefits to all, then system stability is jeopardized. The decline of U.S. hegemony in the twenty-first century—not only through its decline in relative material capabilities but also through the decline in its willingness to lead—is therefore cause for concern for these scholars.

It is clear, then, that realists do not entirely agree among themselves about the relationship between polarity and stability. Research to test this relationship have been inconclusive.

Liberalism and the International System

In the liberal tradition, there are three main conceptions of the international system. The first sees the system as characterized by interdependence and fluidity. The second sees the system as "ordered." The last approach, in the neoliberal institutionalist tradition, agrees with realists that the system is anarchic but argues that, despite anarchy, cooperation is possible and, in some instances, likely.

The first conception sees the international system not as an unchanging structure, but rather as an interdependent system with multiple and fluid interactions through multiple channels, and these channels connect a wide range of different actors. Actors in this process include not only states but also international governmental organizations (such as the United Nations), nongovernmental organizations (such as Human Rights Watch), multinational corporations, and substate actors (such as parliaments and bureaucracies). In their book Power and Interdependence, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye describe the international system as an interdependent system in which the various actors are both sensitive to (affected by) and vulnerable to (suffering costly effects from) the actions of others. Multiple issues and agendas arise in the interdependent

system because the many interactions of actors from different states occur at so many different levels that security issues are not states' only concern. Economic and social issues matter too.8

A second conception sees the international system as an organization characterized by openness, rules, and multilateral cooperation. Building on the tradition of Immanuel Kant and U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, as Chapter 3 discussed, this view holds that a liberal international order governs arrangements among states by means of shared rules and principles, similar to the implicit rules that realists see under varying conditions of polarity. But unlike the realists' implicit rules, this order is an acknowledged order; it is not just patterned behavior or some interconnections. There are several shared principles: the principle of multilateralism, achieved through international organizations and international law; support for economic liberalism; a universalization of human rights; and global leadership by the United States. And institutions play a key role. As John Ikenberry in After Victory argues, the acknowledged goal of a dominant power in this international order is to establish rules that are "both durable and legitimate, but rules and arrangements that also serve the long-term interests of the leading state."9 To do that, the dominant power limits its own autonomy and commits to policies of openness and cooperation that serve the interests of all.

The recent nationalist and populist upheavals that began to roil the United States and other Western countries in the 2010s, and the reemergence of strong authoritarian states, pose a challenge to this liberal order. The West has turned inward generally and sometimes even against other liberal states and has been less willing to adopt the policies needed to sustain that order. And authoritarian states challenge the major principles on trade and human rights that undergird that order. At least three schools of thought exist regarding the future of the liberal international order.

The first advocates for reform of the international liberal order. Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane articulate this school of thought in their article provocatively titled "The Liberal Order

Is Rigged. Fix It Now or Watch It Wither." They (and others) argue that liberal economic globalization and multilateralism have not benefitted everyone—elites have prospered and ordinary people have been left out. The United States has intervened too much and not delivered on its promises. Thus, urgent reform is needed if the liberal order is to survive.10 The second school suggests that even rising powers that are not liberal democracies benefit from the liberal international order through free trade and the institutions that help to sustain it. They are therefore unlikely to tear down the order completely. Even if the liberal democratic states decrease in relative power and turn increasingly inward, the order is likely to live on. The third school asserts that states are already returning to their old habits: the return of geopolitics and rising nationalism, unconstrained by liberal principles.11 Which of these predictions will play out, however, is open to question.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESThe International System: Two Views from China

Chinese policy makers and scholars suggest at least two different views of the international system and China's proper role within that system. One view is that China's actions are consistent with an international system based on realist ideas of power projection. The second suggests that the growing power of China is serving as a driver for strengthening and reforming the liberal international order.

China has asserted itself as a confident great power after decades of being closed to the world. After four decades of economic growth of more than 9 percent annually, it has become the world's second-largest economy and uses that economic leverage to promote its national interests within the international system. China supports massive infrastructure projects as part of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, consistent with its interests in exporting goods to countries across Asia and beyond. China is also investing in infrastructure, technology, and raw materials in Africa in an effort to bring those countries closer to China and its interests.

China is also defending its national interest in ways consistent with the One-China policy: the view that Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan, and the islands in the South China Sea are integral parts of China. Since 2014, China has thus undertaken a policy of dredging thousands of metric tons of sand onto coral reefs to create artificial islands to strengthen its territorial claims in the South China Sea. As expected of a great power, China refused to recognize the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which found that these actions violated international law. China will continue to oppose the designs of neighboring states, which consistently refute China's claim on the islands. In line with the One-China policy, China is also preventing foreign interference in determining how Hong Kong should be governed and is limiting the freedoms that the territory enjoyed.

China has built the Subi Reef, pictured here, into a human-made island in the Spratly Island group.

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The contending view is that China recognizes two of the key principles of the international liberal order: support for an open trading system that also provides assistance and preferential treatment for less developed countries and multilateralism through international organizations. As China's President Xi Jinping argued, China "has special responsibilities for the maintenance of world order." As it has risen in power, it now has the capabilities to fulfill those obligations.a

China supports free trade through the multilateral World Trade Organization (WTO) and various other trade agreements—particularly those with less developed countries. It has also assumed greater responsibilities in the United Nations by establishing a China-UN Peace and Development Trust Fund of $10 billion and joining the new UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, contributing an 8,000-strong Chinese standby peacekeeping force. China has also offered a $100 million grant to the African Union to support the creation of the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis unit. China's actions show its

commitment to multilateralism embodied by the UN, other regional organizations, and the WTO. As one scholar argues, “China’s emerging global role might help strengthen and refurbish many important principles that undergird the existing liberal international order.”b

But China also seeks changes in the current liberal international order, particularly with regard to human rights. China believes that the fundamental human right from which other rights flow is economic development. Development is the way to achieve peace, security, and human rights protections. This reflects values of the current liberal order but with a crucial difference: China does not place democratic political reforms or human rights requirements as prerequisites for backing policies designed to forward economic development in other states. For China, economic development must come first, and other rights will then follow.

China also supports the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. While they embody multilateral ideas consistent with the liberal international order, they also compete with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, pressuring these multilateral institutions to reform. These new institutions help to address the failures of the old ones and enable states to make their own decisions about economic development. Together, China’s approach to the liberal international order shows that it will likely play an important role both in strengthening certain aspects of that order and in reforming others.

Overall, China’s policies reflect both realist and liberal ideas about the nature of the international system. Which of these will dominate China’s actions in the future? The world will be watching.

FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Do you think the realist or more liberal view of China’s role in the international system is more accurate? Why?

Which perspective do you think will characterize China’s foreign policy in the future? Why?

How is China's approach to the liberal international order different from the Western view?

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A third liberal view of the international system is held by neoliberal institutionalists. Like realists, neoliberal institutionalists see the international system as anarchic and acknowledge that each individual state acts in its own self-interest. But neoliberal institutionalists draw different conclusions about state behavior in the international system. It may be a cooperative system, wherein states choose to cooperate because they realize that they will have future interactions with the same actors (see Chapter 7). Those repeated interactions provide the motivation for states to create international institutions, which in turn moderate state behavior, providing a guaranteed framework for interactions and a context for bargaining. International institutions provide focal points for coordination and serve to make state commitments more credible by specifying what is expected, thereby encouraging states to establish reputations for compliance. Thus, for neoliberal institutionalists, institutions have important and independent effects on interstate interactions, both by providing information and by framing actions, but they do not necessarily affect states' underlying motivations. The international system may be anarchic, but cooperation may emerge through institutions.

Constructivism and the International System

Constructivists reject the notion that the international system exists objectively or gives rise to objective rules or principles. There is no set order to the international system. While most constructivists accept the notion that the system is anarchic, they do argue that states can shape the anarchic character of the international system as they interact, creating different types of orders. We can therefore know nothing from international material structures alone. Material capabilities matter, but the distribution of power only sets constraints as to what orders are possible. Within that range, one can understand what order emerges only by looking at states' ideas, identities, and interactions.

Martha Finnemore in The Purpose of Intervention suggests that there have been different international "orders" with different shared understandings about what constitutes a threat and how states should address those threats. She traces at least four European international orders.12

The first order was an eighteenth-century "balance." However, unlike realists' conception of balancing, constructivists argue that there was nothing inevitable about it. The balance of power existed only because the European states shared a belief that hegemony/empire needed to be avoided and they therefore balanced against rising powers. Deterrence by countervailing force was key. The second order—a nineteenth-century "concert"—was also characterized by balancing. However, the balance in this order was maintained through assurances and a principle of union among the states rather than the threat of force. As constructivists would point out, the understandings among the states in this order were very different from the previous order despite a similar distribution of material power among them.

The third order—a "spheres-of-influence" system—existed during the Cold War and was characterized by very different goals and motivations. Rather than a shared goal of preventing hegemony/empire, the system was based on competition between the Soviet Union and the West with the goal of protecting against ideological threats stemming from the other side. Backed by the material power of the Soviet Union and United States, the world order divided into two spheres of influence where each side could organize political and economic life according to its own ideological preferences. The fourth order, which arose at the end of the Cold War, was an evolving new order whose purpose was the promotion of liberal democracy, capitalism, and human rights. Order was maintained mostly through multilateral and collective security arrangements.

THEORY IN BRIEF

International System

Realism/Neorealism

Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism

Constructivism

Characterization

Anarchic

Three liberal interpretations: interdependence, liberal international order with shared rules, and realists' notion of anarchy but with possibility of cooperation

International system exists as social construct

Actors

State is primary actor

States, international governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, substate actors

Individuals matter; no differentiation between international and domestic

Constraints

Polarity; distribution of power

Interdependence; institutions

Ongoing interactions

Possibility of Change

Slow change when there are shifts in balance of power and in technology

Low possibility of radical change; constant incremental change as actors are involved in new relationships

Emphasis on change in social norms and identities

Many constructivists would likely point to the shift away from liberal democracy and the rejection of multilateral institutions by many countries as demonstrating a different international order today than what it was at the end of the Cold War. But what is that new order? What are the new goals and actions considered legitimate by states? Time will tell.

Change in the International System

Theories from all three perspectives recognize that the international system not only can affect international politics but also can change over time. For realists, the nature of the change in the system can be reduced to the distribution of peace and war between great powers (small and medium powers matter less). Changes in either the number of major actors or the relative power of those actors may cause a fundamental change in the structure of the international system. According to realists, wars are most often responsible for such fundamental changes in power relationships. For example, World War II caused a relative decline of Great Britain and France, even though they were the victors. The war also signaled the end not only of Germany's and Japan's imperial aspirations but of their considerable military and economic capabilities as well. Their militaries were soundly defeated; their civil societies were destroyed and their infrastructures demolished. Two other powers emerged in dominant positions—the United States, now willing to assume the international role it had shunned after World War I, and the Soviet Union, buoyed by its victory, although economically weakened. The international system had fundamentally changed; the multipolar world had been replaced by a bipolar one.

Robert Gilpin, in War and Change in World Politics, sees another mechanism of system change: states grow at uneven rates because states respond differently to political, economic, and technological developments. Those uneven rates eventually lead to a redistribution of power and thus change the international system. For example, the rapidly industrializing East Asian states—South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (now part of China)—have responded to technological change the fastest. By responding rapidly and with single-mindedness, these states have improved their relative positions. Thus, the actions of a few can change the characteristics of the international system.13

Shifts in technology may also lead to a shift in the international political system. Technological advances—such as the instruments for oceanic navigation, the airplane for transatlantic crossings, satellites and rockets for the

exploration of space, and cyber and Internet technology—have not only expanded the boundaries of accessible geographic space but also brought about changes in the boundaries of the international political system.

Perhaps no technological change has had a stronger impact on the international system than the development of nuclear weapons. Their destructiveness, their inability to discriminate between combatants and civilians, and their evident harm to future generations have led policy makers to reconsider the political utility of the power to destroy. During the Cold War, this led the superpowers to spar through nonnuclear proxies using conventional military technology, rather than fight directly, as Chapter 2 discussed. Since nuclear weapons have not been used in war since 1945, they are no longer seen as a credible threat in some circles. Nevertheless, their use remains greatly feared. Efforts or threats by nonnuclear states to develop such weapons have provoked sharp resistance. The nuclear states do not want a change in the status quo; in their view, nuclear proliferation, particularly in the hands of "rogue" states such as North Korea and Iran, leads to international system instability. Thus, in the view of realists, the international system can change, but the inherent bias among realist interpretations is for continuity.

Liberals see change in the international system as coming from several sources. First, like some realists, liberals recognize that changes in the international system may occur as the result of technological developments. They see these developments as progress that occurs independently, outside the control of states in the system. For example, changes in communication and transportation are responsible for the increasing level of interdependence among states within the international system.

Second, change may occur because of changes in the relative importance of different issue areas. Although realists give primacy to issues of national security, liberals identify the relative importance of other issues. Specifically, in the last decades of the twentieth century, economic issues replaced national security as the leading topic of the international agenda. In the twenty-first century, transnational concerns such as human rights, the environment, and health have

assumed a much more prominent role. These are fundamental changes in the international system, according to most liberal thinking.

Third, change may occur when new actors, including multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, or other participants in global civil society, augment or replace state actors. The various new actors may enter into new kinds of relationships and may alter both the international system and individual state behaviors. These types of changes are compatible with liberal thinking. And, like their realist counterparts, liberal thinkers also acknowledge that change may occur in the overall power structure among the states.

Finally, in the liberal view, cooperation can effect change. Cooperation in trade may lead to cooperation in professional standards and immigration controls and even, eventually, to security cooperation. Change in the system then comes after decades, even centuries, of painstaking, but usually more comprehensive, cooperation.

Multinational corporations like Amazon have had consequential effects on the international system and individual states. While Amazon has increased the flow of goods to consumers across the world, many national and multinational movements have arisen opposing its unfettered expansion, environmental degradation, and unjust labor practices. Here, protesters in France demonstrate in front of Amazon's headquarters.

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Constructivists believe that changes in the system stem from changes in norms, although not all norm changes will be transforming. Social norms can be changed through both collective actions and the efforts of charismatic individuals. Collectively, norms may change through coercion, but most likely, they will change through international institutions, law, and social movements. So although material capabilities do matter in explaining change, just as realists and many liberals assert, "why one order emerges rather than another" can only be seen, Martha Finnemore argues, "by examining the ideas, culture, and social purpose of the actors involved."14

Constructivists, then, are interested in understanding the major changes in the normative structure of the system: how the use of force has evolved over time, how the view of who is human has changed, how ideas about democracy and human rights have internationalized, and how states have been socialized—or resisted socialization—in turn.

The International System as a Level of Analysis: The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

How can the international system level of analysis explain real-world international relations? Consider arguments from the three theoretical perspectives that would use the international system level to explain the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2014 introduced in Chapter 3.

Analyzing the international system as a source of possible explanations for the conflict, a realist would likely highlight the distribution of power in the system, and how that distribution could change. In particular, the move of Ukraine toward the West would shift the distribution of power in its own region toward the United States and states of Europe. Seeking to preserve its hegemony in the region, Russia took military actions to prevent this change in the relative power between itself and the West.

A liberal theorist might highlight the interdependence between the states involved as an important international system–level explanation for the conflict. The trade agreement that Ukraine was seeking to sign with the EU would increase the interdependence between them. This would not only decrease Ukraine's level of dependence on Russia, but also connect Ukraine's own interests to those of the West. Seeking to prevent Ukraine from forming stronger ties with the EU, Russia took action.

A constructivist would likely highlight the important role of the distribution of identities among the states. Following constructivist logic, Russia saw the prospect of Western encroachment into the Russian sphere of influence as a threat only because the identities of the states involved diverged and in many ways were incompatible.

As these examples show, looking at the international system level can help us understand various aspects of international politics. It allows us to see the big picture and the relationship among the various parts. Specifics, however, are lacking. Looking at the state level and the individual level can help add more detail to our understanding of international politics.

Check Your Understanding

Coordination among several states is known as anarchy.

detente.

multipolarism.

multilateralism.

Neoliberal institutionalists and neorealists agree that the international system is _____ in nature but disagree on the potential for _____ outcomes. anarchic; relative

hegemonic; cooperative

anarchic; cooperative

bipolar; relative

Glossary

system

an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction in which a change in one unit causes changes in the others

multipolar

the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in more than two states

bipolar

the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in two states or coalitions of states

unipolar

the power to conquer all other states in the system combined resides within a single state

hegemon

a dominant state that has a preponderance of power; often establishes and enforces the rules and norms in the international system

multilateralism

the conduct of international activity by three or more states in accord with shared general principles, often, but not always, through international institutions

Endnotes

Note 03: Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon, “How Hegemony Ends: The Unraveling of American Power,” Foreign Affairs 99:4 (July/August 2020): 156. See the book by the same authors, Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). Return to reference 3

Note 04: Kenneth N. Waltz, “International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of World Power,” Journal of International Affairs 21:2 (1967): 229. Return to reference 4

Note 05: Kenneth N. Waltz, “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb,” Foreign Affairs 91:4 (July/August 2012): 5. Return to reference 5

Note 06: Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). Return to reference 6

Note 07: Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 (New York: Random House, 1987). Return to reference 7

Note 08: Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2001). Return to reference 8

Note 09: G. John Ikenberry, After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 50. Return to reference 9

Note 10: Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane, “The Liberal Order Is Rigged. Fix It Now or Watch It Wither,” Foreign

Affairs 96:3 (May/June 2017): 36–44; and G. John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, not Less," Foreign Affairs 96:3 (May/June 2017): 133–42. Return to reference 10

Note 11: Robert Kagan, The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018). Return to reference 11

Note 12: Martha Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). Return to reference 12

Note 13: Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Return to reference 13

Note 14: Finnemore, Intervention, p. 95. Return to reference 14

Note a: Rosemary Foot, "China's Challenge to the UN and Global Order," GlobalAsia 15:2 (June 2020), www.globalasia.org/v15no2/cover/chinas-challenge-to-the-un-and-global-order_rosemary-foot (accessed 9/7/20). Return to reference a

Note b: Chu Yun-han, "It's Time to See China for the Emerging Reformist Power It Is," GlobalAsia 15:2 (June 2020), www.globalasia.org/v15no2/cover/its-time-to-see-china-for-the-emerging-reformist-power-it-is_chu-yun-han (accessed 9/7/20). Return to reference b

THE STATE

The state is a second level of analysis from which we can derive explanations of international phenomena. Much of the history traced in Chapter 2 was the history of how the state emerged from the post-Westphalian framework and developed in tandem with sovereignty and the nation. All three perspectives acknowledge the importance of the state, but despite this emphasis, the state is inadequately conceptualized. As the scholar James Rosenau laments, "All too many studies posit the state as a symbol without content, as an actor whose nature, motives, and conduct are so self-evident as to obviate

any need for precise conceptualizing." Often, in fact, the concept seems to be used as a residual category to explain that which is otherwise inexplicable in macro politics."15

Under international law, for an entity to officially qualify as a state, it must meet four fundamental legal conditions, as outlined in the 1933 Montevideo Convention. First, a state must have a territorial base, with geographically defined boundaries. Second, a stable population must reside within its borders. Third, this population should owe allegiance to an effective government. Finally, other states must recognize the state diplomatically.

These legal criteria are not absolute; they are often subject to various interpretations. Most states do have a territorial base, though the precise borders are often disputed. While the Palestinian National Authority was given a measure of authority over the West Bank and Gaza, for instance, those borders are not only contested but often changing due to the annexation of Israeli settlements in that same territory. Also, Palestine is not officially recognized as a state in many international bodies, despite its attempt to further that status. Possessing territory is so important that states often try to expand their borders. China, for example, has asserted claims in the contested Spratly Islands of the South China Sea in an attempt to solidify access to oil and gas reserves.

Most states have a stable population, but some migrant communities and nomadic peoples cross borders, as the Maasai peoples of Kenya and Tanzania do, undetected by state authorities. And a few states might experience a sudden population increase due to the influx of refugees or migrants.

Most states have some type of institutional structure for governance, but whether the people are obedient to it cannot always be known. Such a structure might also be problematic if the people are not necessarily obedient to it and the government's institutional legitimacy is constantly questioned. A state does not need to have a particular form of government, but most of its people must acknowledge the legitimacy of that government. In 2010, the people of Egypt told the international community that they no longer recognized the

legitimacy of the government led by Hosni Mubarak, leading to demonstrations and ultimately the downfall of his administration. In 2020 and 2021 the people of Belarus in mass demonstrations expressed their dissatisfaction with authoritarian rule, just as the people of Myanmar opposed the military coup in 2021.

Finally, other states must recognize the state diplomatically. But how many states must recognize the state to satisfy this criterion? There is no definitive answer. The Republic of Transkei—a tiny piece of land carved out of South Africa that formed in 1976—was recognized by just one state, South Africa. That proved insufficient to give Transkei status as a state, and the territory was reincorporated into South Africa in 1994.

Some states are contested. In early 2008, Kosovo, once a semiautonomous part of Yugoslavia and later a province of Serbia, declared independence from Serbia. It adopted a constitution and established a ministry of foreign affairs. By 2020, 100 states had recognized Kosovo's independence, but these states did not include Serbia, Russia, and five EU members.

Governments must be recognized by their citizens in order to be effective. In 2020 and 2021, citizens of Belarus staged massive demonstrations to protest the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko after widespread reports of election fraud in August 2020.

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Other states that fulfill the four criteria but are unrecognized in the international system include Palestine, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia, among others, each for different reasons. They are variously described as "quasi-countries teetering on the brink of statehood," which are in "the international community's prenatal ward" or, more simply, states in limbo land.16 So although the legal conditions for statehood provide a yardstick, that measuring stick is not absolute.

Importantly, the definition of a state differs from that of a nation. A nation is a group of people who share a set of characteristics. Do a people share a common history and heritage, a common language and set of customs, or similar lifestyles? If so, then the people make up a nation. At the core of the concept of a nation is the notion that people with commonalities owe their allegiance to the nation and to its legal representative, the state. This feeling of commonality, of people uniting together for a cause, provided the foundation for the French Revolution and spread to Central and South America and central Europe. The belief that nations should form their own states propelled the formation of a unified Italy and Germany in the nineteenth century. The recognition of commonalities among people (and hence of differences from other groups) spread with new technologies and education. When the printing press became widely used, the masses could read in their national languages; with improved methods of transportation, people could travel and witness firsthand similarities and differences among other groups. With better communications, elites could use the media to promote unity or, sometimes, to exploit differences.

Some nations, like the Danes and Italians, formed their own states. The convergence of the state and nation, the nation-state, is the foundation for national self-determination, the idea that peoples sharing nationhood have a right to determine how and under what conditions they should live. Other nations are spread among several states. One of the largest groups of people without their own state is the Kurds. Between 25 and 35 million strong, the Kurds are scattered in the mountainous areas of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq; their language, Kurdish, is unrelated to either Arabic or Turkish, and most Kurds are Sunni Muslims. After World War I, the Kurds sought self-rule and an independent Kurdistan, but independence did not occur —the states in the region fought to keep the Kurds within their own boundaries, and the Kurds themselves were divided. Following the 2003 Iraq War, the new Iraq constitution called for an autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government for the Kurds in Iraq, resulting in an economically vibrant area separate from the chaos in the rest of Iraq. And the 2011 Arab Spring offered new opportunities for Kurdish nationhood, as

Syria was plunged into a civil war and the Kurds seized control of the Kurdish-majority regions. As one of the Kurdish leaders said, “All the facts on the ground encourage the Kurds to be independent.”17 In fact, in 2017 Kurdish leaders conducted an independence referendum in the Kurdish area of Iraq. It passed with almost 93 percent of the vote, but drew condemnation from the Iraqi government as well as other countries with Kurdish populations. The Iraqi Supreme Federal Court ruled the referendum unconstitutional just months later, and Kurdish groups in Iraq have been targeted by attacks from Turkey and Iran.

Other states have within their borders several different nations —India, Russia, and South Africa are prominent examples. In the United States and Canada, a number of different Native American nations are part of the state, as are multiple immigrant communities. The state and the nation do not always coincide. Yet over time in the latter cases, a common identity and nationality have been forged, even in the absence of religious, ethnic, or cultural similarity. In the case of the United States, national values reflecting commonly held ideas are expressed in public rituals, including reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, singing the national anthem, and volunteering in one’s community.18 Nations and states are both complex and constantly evolving.

Some of the hundreds of national subgroups around the world, which count over 900 million people, identify more with a particular culture or religion than with a particular state, often experiencing discrimination or persecution because of their identity. Yet not all ethnonationalists aspire to the same goals. Some want recognition of a unique status, the right to speak and write a particular language or practice their religion, or special seats in representative bodies, as the Basques in Spain and France desire. Still other groups seek separation and the right to form their own state, as Catalans in Spain have expressed in referendum but not achieved. And some prefer joining with another state that is populated by fellow ethnonationalists.

One persistent dispute over the state and nation involves the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, also called the

Republic of China (ROC). After World War II, Mao Zedong and his communist revolutionaries took over the territory and government of mainland China, forcing the former nationalist government to flee to the small island of Taiwan. Both governments claimed to represent the Chinese nation, and the PRC has always maintained that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China—a policy it calls the One-China policy. The relationship between China and Taiwan became more complicated after democracy was established in Taiwan in 1990, since one major political party supports independence for Taiwan while the other supports a continuation of the status quo.

The so-called China question—the conflict over the state and nation of China—continues today. A top-level contact, the first in 66 years, occurred in late 2015 between China and Taiwan. However, in response to President Ma Ying-jeou's "warming" toward China, an electoral backlash followed with the opposition nationalist party winning. China responded by suspending official contact with Taiwan. In 2020, following China's crackdown on democratic protestors in Hong Kong and the imposition of a strict security law, the percent of Taiwan's people viewing China as a friend dropped to 23 percent—down from 38 percent the year earlier. In 2020 and 2021, the mainland continued conducting provocative military drills as a "warning" about independence. In response, Taiwan increased defense spending and reaffirmed its security ties to the United States.19

Disputes over state territories and the desires of nations to form their own states have been major sources of instability and even conflict since the end of colonialism in Africa and the Middle East, and, more recently, after the breakups of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Another of these intractable conflicts is that between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, who each claim the same territory. This conflict has been complicated by several factors: Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Bahá'ís each claim certain land and monuments as sacred; Arab states intensely oppose the existence of the state of Israel; and Israel has gradually expanded its territory through war and settlements. Since the founding of Israel in 1948, the

Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine have been involved in six interstate wars and three popular uprisings. Civilians on both sides have been harmed and killed, and many continue to live as refugees. Policy makers have debated several alternatives. Should Israel and the Palestinian territories be divided into two separate independent states? The complicated boundaries exacerbated by the increasing number of Jewish settlers on the West Bank make that solution increasingly unlikely. Should the two nations be part of one multinational state? That would likely mean the end of the Jewish democratic state. Or should the Palestinians focus on attaining rights other than self-determination—basic political and civil rights—within the current structure?

States are central actors in international relations. Being recognized as a state therefore has great significance, as it influences a people's ability to act in the international system. Each of the three perspectives provides insights into the role of the state in international relations.

International Relations Perspectives and the State

Realists generally hold a statist, or state-centric, view. They believe that states are autonomous actors constrained only by the structural anarchy of the international system. States enjoy sovereignty—the authority to govern matters that are within their own borders and the right not to have other entities intervene in those affairs. As sovereign entities, states have a consistent set of goals—that is, a national interest—that for realists is defined in terms of power. When states act to pursue their national interests, according to the realists, they do so as autonomous, unitary actors. The factor that differentiates states from one another is therefore not their internal characteristics but variation in their power (i.e., their material capabilities).

While neoliberal institutionalists share a similar assumption with realists that states are unitary actors, for most theories in the liberal view, the state enjoys sovereignty but is not an autonomous actor. Just as liberals believe the international system is a process occurring among many actors, they see the state as a pluralist arena whose function is to maintain the rules that ensure that various interests (both governmental and

societal) compete fairly and effectively in the game of politics. There is no single explicit or consistent national interest; there are many. These interests often compete against each other within a pluralistic framework. A state's national interests change over time, reflecting the interests and relative power positions of competing groups inside and sometimes also outside the state. From the liberal perspective, the internal characteristics of states therefore matter. How a state acts in the international system is influenced by whether that state is a democracy or autocracy, whether it is open or closed to trade and investment, and various characteristics of its economic system.

Constructivists see the key concepts governing our conception of the state—such as sovereignty and national interests—as socially constructed. They thus conceptualize the state very differently than theorists from other perspectives. Constructivists argue that the idea of sovereignty governs state behavior only because when states interact, they do so in a way that treats themselves and other states as sovereign entities. Constructivists also see national interests and national identities as social constructs. For constructivists, national interests are neither material nor given. They are ideational, ever-changing, and evolving in response to both domestic factors and international norms and ideas. States share a variety of goals and values, which they are socialized into by international and nongovernmental organizations. Those norms can change state preferences, which in turn can influence state behavior. So, too, do states have multiple identities, including a shared understanding of national identity, which also changes, altering state preferences and hence state behavior.

THEORY IN BRIEF

The State

Realism/Neorealism

Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism

Constructivism

Characteristics

States are autonomous, unitary actors, constrained by anarchy

States are sovereign but not autonomous

States are socially constructed; states have multiple identities

Behaviors

Consistent set of goals defined by national interest

No consistent national interest; governmental and societal interests compete; characteristics of states matter

National interests/identities socially constructed and change over time

The State as a Level of Analysis: The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

How can these state-level factors (their power, interests, and characteristics) help us explain the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict? Realists would highlight the states involved as the key actors, and their national interest defined in terms of security as central in influencing the outbreak of the conflict. It was Russia's desire to protect its national security, which it perceived would be threatened by the growth of the power of the United States and Europe in the region, that led Russia to act militarily against its weaker neighbor, Ukraine. Preventing Ukraine from allying with these Western states would help ensure that Russian security was not jeopardized.

Liberals would also highlight the importance of the state level of analysis in understanding the conflict. However, they would more likely look to Russia's domestic characteristics, rather than just its power and security interests. For example, many liberals argue that democracies, because of their common domestic characteristics, are unlikely to engage in conflict with one another. Both Russia and Ukraine lacked many of the important characteristics that help prevent democracies from going to war with each other. It is therefore not surprising that a conflict broke out when their interests clashed.

Constructivists could also make an argument about the conflict focusing on the state level of analysis. For example, constructivists would highlight the identities of the states involved. They might argue that conflict in the ideas and identities of Russia and the West is what led Russia to see an

increase in the power of the Western states in the region as a threat.

As is the case with the international system level, using the state level of analysis has both advantages and disadvantages. The centrality of the state in international politics cannot be disputed, and looking to the state level helps highlight the interactions that define international politics today. However, states are not actually unitary actors. Individuals within states make the decisions that are then reflected in what we observe as state actions. Looking at the individual level can therefore help us better understand why some policy decisions are adopted and others are not, as well as how those decisions are made.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is not an aspect of a state? A state has a territorial base.

A state must have a military capable of defense.

Other states recognize it diplomatically.

A state's population must owe and allegiance to a government.

Which of the following perspectives view states as pluralist arenas that oversee the competition of various governmental and societal interests? realism

neorealism

liberalism

constructivism

Glossary

state

an organized political unit that has a geographic territory, a stable population, and a government to which the population owes allegiance and that is legally recognized by other states

nation

a group of people sharing a common language, history, or culture

nation-state

the entity formed when people sharing the same historical, cultural, or linguistic roots form their own state with borders, a government, and international recognition; trend began with French and American Revolutions

Endnotes

Note 15: James N. Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 117–18. Return to reference 15

Note 16: Graeme Wood, "Limbo World," Foreign Policy (January/February 2010): 49. Return to reference 16

Note 17: Quoted in Yaroslav Trofimov, "The Stateless Nation," Wall Street Journal, June 20–21, 2015, C2. Return to reference 17

Note 18: Minxin Pei, "The Paradoxes of American Nationalism," Foreign Policy 134 (May/June 2003): 31–37. Return to reference 18

Note 19: Sarah Zheng and Kinling Lo, "Taiwan Unveils Record Defence Budget as Beijing Stands Firm on Claim to Island," South China Morning Post, August 13, 2020. Return to reference 19

THE INDIVIDUAL

The third level of analysis focuses on the role of individuals in international politics. Sometimes, individual motives and preferences seem to make a difference in international politics. The example of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev illustrates the ability of individual leaders to effect real change. After coming to power in 1985, he began to frame the challenges confronting the Soviet Union differently, identifying the Soviet security problem as part of the larger problem of weakness in the Soviet economy. Through a process of trial and error, Gorbachev realized that the economic system had to be reformed and undertook major reforms. Although he eventually lost power, he was responsible for initiating broad economic and foreign policy change, including extricating the Soviet Union from its war in Afghanistan. Similarly, the

Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping established himself as the architect of the new China after 1978. Under his socialist market economy, the state permitted limited private competition and gradually opened itself economically to the outside world.

These examples show how political elites can make major changes in policies. However, non-elites matter too. Private individuals can influence international politics in important ways, and through a conglomeration of individual interests and actions that generate public opinion and mass political movements and, ultimately, political change. We will consider each of these roles of individuals in turn.

The Role of Elites

Political elites play an important role in shaping states' foreign policies. However, some individuals seem to have a greater impact on foreign policy than others. This variation in influence is affected by the personal characteristics of individual elites, their thought processes, and situational factors.

The Influence of Personality and Personal Interests

Political psychologist Margaret Hermann has found a number of personality traits that affect elite foreign policy behaviors. Using these traits, she identified two types of leaders: "independent" leaders and "participatory" leaders. Independent leaders are inclined to adopt foreign policies that are unilaterally chosen and unilateral in content. They tend to have high levels of nationalism, a strong belief in their own ability to control events, a strong need for power, low levels of conceptual complexity (the ability to discuss policies and ideas in a discerning way), and high levels of distrust of others. Participatory leaders are more inclined to emphasize the participation with others in the foreign policymaking process, as well as working with other governments on the content of the resulting policies. They tend to have low levels of nationalism, less of a belief in their ability to control events, a high need for affiliation, high levels of conceptual complexity, and low levels of distrust of others.20

Both Hermann and subsequent researchers using the same schema have found that these characteristics and orientations matter. For example, one study analyzed the personality characteristics of the former British prime minister Tony Blair using Hermann's categories to organize Blair's foreign policy answers to questions posed in the House of Commons.21 The researcher found that Blair had a strong belief in his own ability to control events and a high need for power, accompanied by low conceptual complexity. These personality findings go a long way toward explaining British foreign policy toward the 2003 Iraq War, a policy that many in the government and the British public opposed. Thus, even in democracies, where institutional constraints are high, individual personality characteristics influence foreign policy orientation and behavior.

Personality characteristics affect leadership in weak democracies and nondemocracies because of the absence of effective institutional checks. For example, Vladimir Putin's personal characteristics have played an important role in shaping Russian policies. Putin has carefully crafted a strong personal image—a bare-chested, horseback-riding, tiger-wrestling, race car–driving, hockey-playing macho man. He has established excellent relations with the various religious groups by supporting the Orthodox Church and its conservative traditional Russian values. He dwells on the weaknesses of former leaders like Tsar Nicholas II and Mikhail Gorbachev, and ruthlessly suppresses and imprisons opposition leaders like Alexei Navalny.

These personal characteristics are reflected in many Russian policies. Russia's strong stance against the expansion of NATO—to the point of taking military action against Ukraine—reflects Putin's strong desire to stand up to others (the West, in particular). His response to the "travesty" of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's cession of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was the retaking of the peninsula in 2014. The passage of a controversial law banning homosexual propaganda in 2013 and the failure of the government to prevent homophobic violence help illustrate Putin's support of traditional values.

Personal characteristics can even be important in explaining war. In Why Leaders Fight, three scholars show that leaders' beliefs, worldviews, and tolerance for risk and military conflict are shaped by their life experiences. Using data on these characteristics of leaders from 1875 to 2004, they show that within the constraints of domestic political institutions and the international system, the individual leader plays an important role in determining when and why states go to war.22

Personality characteristics, then, partly determine what decisions individual leaders make, and thus the policies adopted by the state. But to make those decisions, they have to process information about the issue at hand.

The Influence of Information Processing

Individual elites, like all people, use a variety of psychological techniques to process and evaluate information. In perceiving and interpreting new and often contradictory information, individuals rely on existing perceptions, usually based on prior experiences. Such perceptions are the "screens" that enable individuals to process information selectively; these perceptions have an integrating function, permitting the individual to synthesize and interpret the information. Perceptions also serve an orienting function, providing guidance about future expectations and expediting planning for future contingencies. If those perceptions form a relatively integrated set of images, then they are called a belief system.

International relations scholars have devised methods to test the existence of elite perceptions, although research has not been conducted on many individuals because sufficient data are usually unavailable. Ole Holsti systematically analyzed 434 of the publicly available statements of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles concerning the Soviet Union during the years 1953–54. His research showed convincingly that Dulles held an unwavering image of the Soviet Union, focusing on atheism, totalitarianism, and communism. To Dulles, the Soviet people were good, but their leaders were bad; the state was good, the Communist Party bad. This image was unvarying; the character of the Soviet Union did not change.

Whether this perception, gleaned from Dulles's statements, affected U.S. decisions during the period cannot be stated with certainty. He was, after all, only one among a group of top leaders. Yet a plethora of decisions made during that time was consistent with his perception.23

Our images and perceptions of the world are continually bombarded by new, sometimes overwhelming, and often discordant information. Images and belief systems, however, are not generally changed, and almost never are they radically altered. Thus, individual elites use, usually unconsciously, several psychological mechanisms to process the information they encounter in the world. Table 4.1 summarizes these different processes.

TABLE 4.1

Psychological Mechanisms Used to Process Information

TECHNIQUE

EXPLANATION

EXAMPLE

Cognitive consistency

The tendency to accept information that is compatible with what has previously been accepted, often ignoring inconsistent information.

Just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, military spotters saw unmarked planes approaching Hawaii. Not believing the evidence, they discounted the sightings.

Evoked set

Details from a present situation that are similar to information gleaned from past situations.

During the Vietnam War, U.S. decision makers saw the Korean War as a precedent, although there were critical differences.

Mirror image

Seeing in one's opponent the opposite of characteristics seen in oneself. One views the opponent as hostile and

uncompromising, whereas one views oneself as friendly and compromising.

During the Cold War, the U.S. elites and public viewed the Soviet Union in terms of their own mirror image: the United States was friendly, the Soviet Union hostile.

Groupthink

The tendency of individuals to strive for cohesion and sometimes unanimity to achieve cohesion, at the risk of not examining alternative policies.

During the U.S. planning for the Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba in 1961, opponents were ostracized from the planning group.

First, individuals strive for cognitive consistency, ensuring that their beliefs fit together into a coherent whole. For example, individuals like to believe that the enemy of an enemy is a friend, and the enemy of a friend is an enemy. Because of the tendency to be cognitively consistent, individuals select or amplify information that supports existing beliefs and ignore or downplay contradictory information. For example, because both Great Britain and Argentina were friends of the United States prior to their war over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands in 1982, U.S. decision makers denied the seriousness of the conflict. They did not think that their ally would go to war with Argentina over barren islands thousands of miles from Britain's shores. However, the United States underestimated the strength of British public support for military action and misjudged the precarious domestic position of the Argentinian generals, who were trying to bolster their power by diverting attention to a popular external conflict.

Individuals also perceive and evaluate the world according to what they have learned from past events. They look for details of a present episode that look like those of a past one, perhaps ignoring the important differences. Such similar details are often referred to as an evoked set. During the 1956 Suez crisis, for instance, British prime minister Anthony Eden saw Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser as another Hitler. Eden recalled Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's failed

effort to appease Hitler with the Munich agreement in 1938 and thus believed that Nasser, likewise, could not be appeased. Similar thinking led some American elites to describe Iraq as another Vietnam or to see the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan as that country's Vietnam, despite critical differences.

Individual perceptions are often shaped in terms of mirror images whereas one considers one's own actions good, moral, and just, one automatically finds the enemy's actions evil, immoral, and unjust. Mirror imaging often exacerbates conflicts, making it even more difficult to resolve a contentious issue.

The psychological mechanisms that we have discussed so far affect the functioning of both individuals and small groups. But small groups themselves also have psychologically based dynamics that can influence decision making. Psychologist Irving Janis identified one such small group dynamic: groupthink.24 Groupthink is a mode of consensus-seeking behavior among members of tightly knit groups. Members come to value the group (and their membership in it) more than anything else, seeing the group as moral and right. They strive for unanimity, which leads them to suppress personal doubts, silence dissenters, and follow suggestions of the group's leader. The results are a distorted view of reality, excessive optimism that produces rash policies and a tendency to neglect ethical issues.

During the Vietnam War, for example, a top group of U.S. decision makers, unified by bonds of friendship and loyalty, met in what they called the Tuesday lunch group. In the aftermath of President Lyndon Johnson's overwhelming electoral win in 1964, the group basked in self-confidence and optimism, rejecting pessimistic information about North Vietnam's military buildup. When information mounted about increasing South Vietnamese and American casualties and external stresses intensified, the group further closed ranks, its members taking solace in the security of the group. Individuals who did not share the group's thinking were both informally and formally removed from the group because their prognosis that the war effort was going badly contradicted the beliefs of the group.

Political scientist Robert Jervis offers suggestions on how decision makers can safeguard their thinking and minimize mistakes due to the misperceptions that can stem from these psychological processes.25 They need to make their assumptions and beliefs as explicit as possible, be cognizant of the pitfall of interpreting data only as consistent with one's own theory, and be willing to consider information from different angles. Yet even this awareness does not necessarily lead to rational decision making.

The Influence of Situational Factors

Individual elites and their personal characteristics and decision-making processes do not always matter to the same degree in all situations. They can most clearly affect the course of events when at least one of several factors is present.

First, when political institutions are unstable, young, or collapsed, leaders are able to wield significant influence. In these situations, institutions and practices are in the process of being established. An opportunity therefore exists for individual elites to shape the course of their states' trajectory by shaping these institutions and practices in particular ways. Founding fathers such as the United States' George Washington, India's Mohandas Gandhi, Russia's Vladimir Lenin, or South Africa's Nelson Mandela were able to have a great impact because they led in the early years of their nations' lives. Second, when a state's economy is in crisis, individuals can also affect their state's policies in important ways. For example, Adolf Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt, and Mikhail Gorbachev had significant influence on the policies of their states because their economies were in crisis when they came to power.

Third, individuals can affect the course of events when they have few institutional constraints. In dictatorial or highly centralized regimes, top leaders are relatively free from domestic constraints, such as political opposition or societal inputs, and thus are able to chart courses and implement foreign policy relatively unfettered. In younger and struggling democracies, the institutions may not be well established. Indeed, Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan admitted that he relied

“the very least” on his own governmental institutions, but rather, he depended on informal networks and ad hoc governance.26 Figure 4.3 summarizes these situational factors.

FIGURE 4.3

The Impact of Individual Elites

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However, political elites in democracies are also occasionally able to change policy in a dramatic fashion. For example, U.S. president Richard Nixon in 1972 was able to engineer a complete foreign policy reversal in relations with the People’s Republic of China, secretly sending his top foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, for several meetings with the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and his advisers. President Barack Obama in 2015 announced an unexpected policy reversal, opening up dialogue with Cuba after almost five decades, and his administration negotiated a framework nuclear agreement with Iran after almost four decades of little contact. Going in the other direction, President Trump reversed the positive engagement President Obama had begun with Cuba in 2017 and pulled the United States out of the agreement with Iran in 2018. But such changes may be the exception, since many democratic leaders are constrained by bureaucracies and societal groups.

The Role of Private Individuals and Mass Publics

Private individuals and mass publics have the same psychological tendencies as elite individuals and small groups. They think in terms of perceptions and images, they see mirror images, and they use similar information-processing strategies. Even without having an elite decision-making position, they have several paths through which they can influence international politics.

Private Individuals

Although leaders holding formal positions have more opportunity to participate in and shape international relations, private individuals can and do play key roles. Many of these individual voices can magnify their impact through social

media. From Tunisia to Colombia, Iran, and China, individuals have used these tools to expose grievances and corruption and organize protests and demonstrations in support of their individual positions.

Individuals can spur change in the international system, as well. Malala Yousafzai, survivor of three gunshots, has inspired movements around the world for increasing access to education for women and girls.

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A few individuals become crusaders for a cause. Malala Yousafzai, blogging for the BBC in 2009, is a good example. She gained a worldwide audience by describing the harsh life under the Taliban in Pakistan and condemning the discriminatory treatment of girls. In 2012, a gunman shot her for speaking out, elevating her status as a fighter for women's and children's rights. Using that celebrity status, she has lobbied heads of state and delegates to the United Nations, as well as used the public media and her own foundation to promote the cause of education for girls.27 At the age of 15, Greta Thunberg adopted the cause of climate change. She began protesting outside the Swedish Parliament, leading to a worldwide movement of student school strikes in protest of leaders' lack of effort to confront climate change. Thunberg addressed the 2018 UN Climate Change Conference and attended the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, where she famously called out world leaders: "How dare you!"28

Some individuals, while not necessarily setting out to be crusaders, still become such because of their actions. Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian vendor, set himself on fire outside a government building after state authorities confiscated his goods in 2010. The viral video of his self-immolation was seen around the Arab world, not only leading to the overthrow of the Tunisian president, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, in the Jasmine Revolution but also providing the spark for the broader pro-democracy movement in the Arab world, the Arab Spring.

Mass Publics: Public Opinion

Individuals, taken collectively (i.e., the mass public), can also influence states' international politics. One mechanism for doing so is via the effects of public opinion. Individuals might have opinions and attitudes about foreign policy that are different from those of the elites. If so, mass publics could affect international relations when elites listen to these opinions and adopt policies accordingly.

Sometimes a public's general foreign policy orientation reflects a dominant mood of the population that leaders can detect. President George W. Bush was able to capitalize on the public mood in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, (distress after being attacked on home soil) to build support for the war in Afghanistan. Even leaders of authoritarian regimes pay attention to dominant moods, with Chinese leaders curbing corruption at the local and provincial level in response to public anger.

More often than not, however, publics do not express a single, dominant mood; top leaders are usually confronted with an array of public attitudes. Public-opinion polling can provide information about those attitudes. The Eurobarometer, the Latin American Public Opinion Project, and the Afrobarometer each conduct scientific surveys of public attitudes on a wide range of issues over time. State officials and the leadership could avail themselves of reliable data on public opinion. But do leaders fashion policy with these attitudes in mind? Do elites change policy to reflect the preferences of the public?

Evidence from democracies suggests that elites do care about the preferences of the public, although they do not always directly incorporate those attitudes into policy decisions. Leaders care about their popularity because it affects their ability to work; popularity is enhanced if they follow the general mood of the masses or fight for generally popular policies. Such popularity gives democratic leaders more leeway to set a national agenda, but mass attitudes may not always be directly translated into policy.

Mass Publics: Mass Actions

Non-elite individuals might also sometimes have a profound impact on international relations, regardless of the interests of political elites. First, individuals sometimes, though rarely, vote directly on foreign policy issues. For example, some issues related to the European Union have been put to public referendum, including the Maastricht Treaty, the EU Constitution, and the Treaty of Lisbon, as we will discuss in Chapter 9. In 2002, the Swiss people voted in a referendum to join the United Nations. In 2016, the British voted to leave the European Union.

Second, the masses, essentially appearing leaderless, take collective actions that have significant effects on the course of world politics. Individual acts of thousands fleeing East Germany led to the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Twenty-eight years later, the spontaneous exodus of thousands of East Germans through Hungary and Austria led to the tearing down of the wall. Several months of public demonstrations in Guatemala by people seeking an end to widespread corruption ultimately brought down that government in 2015. The spontaneous movement of Syrians and Iraqis fleeing their war-torn countries in masses and the Rohingya fleeing Myanmar have led to a global refugee crisis. And in 2019, mass demonstrations against political elites seen as corrupt and dishonest energized crowds from Chile, Lebanon, Bolivia, and beyond, all facilitated through social media.

Individuals' mass actions can also be organized by a small elite. The "people's putsch" during October 2000 against the Yugoslavian leader Slobodan Miloševi? provides such an example. After 13 years of his rule, people from all walks of Serbian life joined 7,000 striking miners, crippled the economic system, blocked transportation routes, and descended on Belgrade, the capital. Aided by the new technology of the time—the cell phone—they were able to mobilize citizens from all over the country, driving tractors into the city, attacking the Parliament, and disrupting Miloševi?'s radio and TV stations. The opposition elite was behind the scenes, aiding in the mobilization of the masses to affect policy change.

The people's revolution in Serbia against Miloševi? (the Bulldozer Revolution) proved to be a blueprint for action in other states of the postcommunist world. In the Republic of Georgia, in 2003, the Rose Revolution brought a new president to power and a political dynasty was broken. In Ukraine in 2004, the Orange Revolution brought into power an opposition leader, Viktor Yushchenko, who fled to Russia a decade later following the Euromaidan Revolution, named for the central square in Kiev where the demonstrators amassed.

In Egypt it was a group of young private citizens, led by Google executive Wael Ghonim in late 2010, who organized a Facebook and YouTube campaign, calling on over 130,000 followers for the ouster of the government of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. They connected with human rights groups, raising the public awareness of the average Egyptian about governmental abuses. Collaborating with Mohamed ElBaradei (former director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and leader of an opposition political party), they became the voice behind the January 25, 2011, demonstration. Ghonim wrote, "This is Revolution 2.0. No one was a hero because everyone was a hero."29 These various examples illustrate the power of the masses to affect change, with opposition elites and private individuals often having key organizational roles.

International Relations Perspectives and the Individual

For realists, individuals are of little importance. This position comes from the realist assumption that states are unitary actors. States are differentiated not by their government type or the personalities or styles of the leaders in office but by the relative power they hold in the international system. The national interest defined in terms of a quest for power provides continuity in the policies of states even under different individual leaders. Hans J. Morgenthau explained as follows:

The concept of national interest defined as power imposes intellectual discipline upon the observer, infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible. On the side of the actor, it provides for rational discipline in action and

creates the astounding continuity in foreign policy which makes American, British, or Russian foreign policy appear as an intelligible, rational continuum, by and large consistent with itself, regardless of the different motives, preferences, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen.30

Most liberals recognize that leaders do make a difference and individuals may be an appropriate level of analysis—a position that has gained credence over the last several years. Whenever a leadership change happens in a major power such as the United States, China, or Russia, or other powers like Saudi Arabia, North Korea, South Africa, speculation always arises about possible changes in the country's foreign policy. This speculation reflects the general belief that individual leaders, and their personal characteristics and decision-making processes, do make a difference in foreign policy, and hence in international relations.31 According to most liberals, mass publics can also influence international relations through mass actions that pressure state leaders to pursue particular foreign policies.

Constructivists also recognize the importance of individuals. Individual state leaders can shape popular understanding of certain events through the discourse that they use to explain those events. In doing so, they shape the interests that they are expected to represent in their foreign policy decisions. For example, Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology is perceived as a threat in the United States, while the United Kingdom's possession of this technology is not. This is due, in part, to the fact that political elites talk about Iran's pursuit of this technology in a way that frames it as a threat, while this is not the case for the United Kingdom. Mass publics are also agents of potential change through discourse. For example, constructivists credit the changes made in the Soviet Union in the 1980s not only to Gorbachev as a leader but also to a network of Western-oriented policy entrepreneurs who promoted new ideas, which were then implemented.32

The main international relations perspectives differ not only in how they view the role of the individual, but also in how they describe the types of individuals who are likely to matter in international politics. These individuals are often political

elites (political leaders and decision makers), but mass publics and even private individuals can play a central role, often amplified through social media.

THEORY IN BRIEF

The Individual

Realism/Neorealism

Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism

Constructivism

Overall Role of Individuals

Of little importance; states are key actors

Can make a difference in international relations

Can make a difference through their ideas and discourse

Foreign Policy Elites

Constrained by their state and the international system

Affect international relations through choices made and personality factors

Shape popular understanding of certain events through their discourse

Private Individuals

Have effect only in aggregate, as reflected in the national interest

Secondary role to elites and mass publics, but can have some influence

Actions of individuals less important than beliefs

Mass Publics

Actions may be reflected in the national interest

May affect international relations through mass actions that pressure state decision makers

Agents of potential change through discourse

The Individual as a Level of Analysis: The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

How does the individual level of analysis help us better understand the Russia-Ukraine conflict that broke out in 2014? While realists do not focus much attention on the individual, the centrality of power in their explanations of international relations could potentially apply to this level of analysis. For example, an argument could be made that it was Putin's drive for power that led to the instigation of the conflict with Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. His personal image, which focused on projecting Russian power by standing up to the West and saying no to NATO expansion, fueled the conflict.

An explanation at the individual level of analysis from the liberal perspective would likely highlight the important role that the mass public played in influencing Putin's decision to enter the conflict. Russia was in an economic crisis in 2014—an external factor that opened up the possibility for individual leaders to exert important effects on policy. In order to shift public opinion in his direction, Putin used the diversionary tactic of war to rally the mass public around him. The buildup of military forces at the border in 2021 may well have been an attempt to boost sagging popularity. Pressure to secure domestic public support influenced Putin's decision.

A constructivist would go farther in focusing on Putin as an individual and the effects he had on Russia's instigation of the conflict with Ukraine. In particular, it was not simply the act of engaging in the conflict that mattered, and that rallied public opinion. It was the discourse that Putin used prior to the conflict—molding Russian identities around the importance of Crimea in Russian history and identity—that was key. With their identities shaped by Putin's discourse, Russians increasingly supported Putin after the annexation of Crimea.

As with the other levels of analysis, looking at the individual level has both advantages and disadvantages when we seek to understand international politics. It helps us understand the microfoundations of policy decisions, and thus provides important insights into how state relations play out. Yet when

we dwell on this level of detail, we can often miss the bigger picture. Individuals do not act in a vacuum. They act within states, which exist within the overall international system.

Check Your Understanding

An individual can alter the course of events under certain external conditions. Which of the following circumstances correctly captures when an individual is more likely to have a great impact on a country? when political institutions in a country are robust and stable

when a leader is restricted by institutional constraints

when the issue is routine

when an individual leader is faced with an economic crisis

Which theoretical perspective places least importance on the individual level of analysis? realism

liberalism

constructivism

idealism

Glossary

belief system

the organized and integrated perceptions of individuals that form a relatively integrated set of images

cognitive consistency

the tendency to accept information that is compatible with what has previously been accepted, often ignoring inconsistent information

evoked set

details from a present situation that are similar to information gleaned from past situations

mirror images

seeing in one’s opponent the opposite of characteristics seen in oneself

groupthink

a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action

Endnotes

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Note 21: Stephen Benedict Dyson, "Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions," Foreign Policy Analysis 2:3 (July 2006): 289. Return to reference 21

Note 22: Michael C. Horowitz, Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis, Why Leaders Fight (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Return to reference 22

Note 23: Ole Holsti, "The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study," Journal of Conflict Resolution 6 (1962): 244–52. Return to reference 23

Note 24: Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 9. Return to reference 24

Note 25: Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," World Politics 20:3 (April 1968): 454–79. Return to reference 25

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Note 27: Malala Yousafzai, I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013); and He Named Me Malala, directed by Davis Guggenheim (Fox Searchlight Pictures and National Geographic Channel, 2015). Return to reference 27

Note 28: Full speech at the UN climate change conference, reprinted at NBC News, September 23, 2019. Return to reference 28

Note 29: “Top Global Thinkers: Mohamed ElBaradei, Wael Ghonim,” Foreign Policy (December 2011): 36. Return to reference 29

Note 30: Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, brief ed., ed. Kenneth W. Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 5. Return to reference 30

Note 31: Daniel Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Beyond Great Forces: How Individuals Still Shape History,” Foreign Affairs 98:6 (November/December 2019): 148–60. For the specific example of Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, see Dexter Filkins, “The Ascent: A Saudi Prince’s Quest to Remake the Middle East,” The New Yorker, April 9, 2018, 36–49. Return to reference 31

Note 32: Robert G. Herman, “Identity, Norms, and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War,” in The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, ed. P. J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 271–316. Return to reference 32

IN SUM: SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Together, the three levels of analysis provide a place to look for explanations for various international phenomena. Different perspectives place varying degrees of importance on these different levels, but each provides important insights into our understanding of international relations.

Central in all perspectives’ analyses of international relations is the role played by the state. Clearly, the state is worthy of additional study. We therefore turn to a discussion of states and their tools of statecraft in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

Neorealists and neoliberals agree that the international system is anarchic. How do they disagree? Why is that disagreement important?

Leaders such as Iran's former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, and North Korea's Kim Jong-Un are often dismissed as "crazy" or "nuts." What do we mean by these characterizations? Beyond their perceived personalities, what other explanations can be offered for their behavior?

Mass publics often express dissatisfaction with the actions of elites. That dissatisfaction can spill over into the streets and become violent. Could this explain the actions of the mob breaking into the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021? Why or why not? Without social media, do you think these events would have occurred?

The three theoretical perspectives—realism, liberalism, and constructivism—all have different conceptions of the state. Which of these do you think best captures the actions of major powers such as the United States? Does this same perspective best capture the actions of rising powers like India? What about developing states such as Rwanda? Or fragile states such as Syria?

Key Terms

belief system (p. 128) bipolar (p. 108)

cognitive consistency (p. 130) evoked set (p. 130) groupthink (p. 130) hegemon (p. 110)

levels of analysis (p. 104) mirror image (p. 130) multilateralism (p. 111) multipolar (p. 106) nation (p. 121)

nation-state (p. 122) state (p. 119)

system (p. 106)

unipolar (p. 108)

Glossary

belief system

the organized and integrated perceptions of individuals that form a relatively integrated set of images

bipolar

the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in two states or coalitions of states

cognitive consistency

the tendency to accept information that is compatible with what has previously been accepted, often ignoring inconsistent information

evoked set

details from a present situation that are similar to information gleaned from past situations

groupthink

a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action

hegemon

a dominant state that has a preponderance of power; often establishes and enforces the rules and norms in the international system

levels of analysis

analytical framework based on the ideas that events in international relations can be explained by looking at individuals, states, or the international system and that causes at each level can be separated from causes at other levels

mirror images

seeing in one's opponent the opposite of characteristics seen in oneself

multilateralism

the conduct of international activity by three or more states in accord with shared general principles, often, but not always, through international institutions

multipolar

the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in more than two states

nation

a group of people sharing a common language, history, or culture

nation-state

the entity formed when people sharing the same historical, cultural, or linguistic roots form their own state with borders, a government, and international recognition; trend began with French and American Revolutions

state

an organized political unit that has a geographic territory, a stable population, and a government to which the population owes allegiance and that is legally recognized by other states

system

an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction in which a change in one unit causes changes in the others

unipolar

the power to conquer all other states in the system combined resides within a single state

5

The State and the Tools of Statecraft

*

Tensions have continually escalated between the United States and China in the last decade. In 2018, the Trump administration introduced tariffs on Chinese imports, and in 2020 a Chinese diplomat accused the U.S. military of bringing COVID-19 to China. How will the two nations cooperate (or not cooperate) moving forward?

Over the last decade, tensions between the United States and China have been rising. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 produced another altercation when a Chinese diplomat accused the U.S. military of potentially bringing the virus to China. The United States countered by claiming China was to blame and must be held accountable. These are but two of a list of

accusations and actions taken by both the United States and China in recent years.

Back in March 2018, the United States imposed sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports in response to alleged Chinese theft of U.S. technology and intellectual property. China imposed retaliatory tariffs the following month. The two countries engaged in a trade war of tit-for-tat tariff increases. By mid-2020, the tariffs of the two countries covered $550 billion worth of goods from China and $185 billion worth of goods from the United States.

While this trade war waged on, tensions in U.S.-Chinese relations spilled over into other economic issues. In August 2019, China weakened its currency relative to the U.S. dollar —a move analysts say was likely in response to President Trump's threat to increase tariffs to 10 percent on $300 billion worth of Chinese goods. In response, the United States designated China a "currency manipulator," claiming it was trying to gain an unfair advantage in trade. China openly criticized the move, saying that the United States was "disregard[ing] the facts."1 Relations appeared to soften in January 2020 when China and the United States signed a "phase one" trade deal to begin to relax some of the tariffs that they had each imposed, and the United States dropped its designation of China as a currency manipulator.

But in July 2020, as the pandemic raged, President Trump refused to talk to China about a "phase two" deal to help end the trade war. In November 2020, the U.S. president signed a bill in support of the pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong that stood in defiance to China. China responded by officially condemning the move, imposing sanctions on several U.S.-based organizations and suspending U.S. warship visits to Hong Kong. The disagreements were now strategic. What will China do in response to U.S. economic policies? How will economic statecraft impact the political/strategic relationship? Is this the beginning of a new Cold War?

States adopt a variety of different types of policies when they interact, and these policies are often tit-for-tat actions taken in response to the behavior of the other side. But states do not

always take the same actions as the states they are interacting with. How can we explain the different actions and strategies states use? When will they use force? When will they instead use economic sanctions? Or diplomatic actions? To answer these questions, first, we must understand state power and its sources. For without power, none of these types of actions are likely to be effective. Second, we must explain the policies available to states and how power helps states use them. Third, we must understand how decisions regarding which policies to adopt are made.

As discussed in Chapter 4, a state is an entity that has a geographically defined territory and a stable population owing allegiance to an effective government and that is recognized diplomatically by other states. In the practice of international politics and in thinking about international relations, the state is central. What the state does and the tools of statecraft it exercises (its strategies for action vis-à-vis other states) are critical. The first step in studying statecraft is to understand state power—that is, what can help states wield their various policy tools.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain the various sources of states' power potential.

Understand the models that help us explain how states make foreign policy decisions.

Explain the various tools of statecraft. Which ones are preferred by realists? liberals? constructivists?

Analyze the major contemporary challenges to the state.

*

Glossary

state

an organized political unit that has a geographic territory, a stable population, and a government to which the population owes allegiance and that is legally recognized by other states

Endnotes

Note 01: Quoted in Sam Meredith, “China Responds to US after Treasury Designates Beijing a ‘Currency Manipulator,’” CNBC, August 6, 2019, www.cnbc.com/2019/08/06/trade-war-china-responds-to-us-after-claim-of-being-a-currency-manipulator.html (accessed 7/28/20). Return to reference 1

STATE POWER

All three international relations perspectives see states as important actors. One of the most important reasons for this is that states have power. Power refers to the ability not only to influence others but also to control outcomes, producing results that would not have occurred naturally. States have power with respect to one another and with respect to actors within the state. Whether a state can actually be effective at influencing outcomes and others depends on the power potential of each state. A state’s power potential depends on the resources it has at its disposal to try to wield possible influence. Those resources can be natural, tangible, and/or intangible.

All theoretical perspectives acknowledge the importance of power, but each pays attention to different types of power. Realists and liberals conceptualize power in materialist terms. Realists focus primarily on natural and tangible power sources, while liberals pay attention to natural, tangible, and intangible sources. Constructivists emphasize the nonmaterialist sources found in the power of ideas, one of the intangible sources. Although many of these sources of power are domestic in origin, power is situational, multidimensional, and dynamic.

Natural Sources of Power Potential

The first source of power potential is natural—it flows from innate characteristics of the state. The three most important natural sources of power potential are geographic size and position, natural resources, and population.

Geographic size and position are the natural sources of power that international relations theorists recognized first. A large geographic expanse gives a state automatic power potential. When we think of power, we think of large states—Russia, China, the United States, Australia, India, and Brazil, for

instance. (Long borders, however, may be a weakness: they must be defended, an expensive and often problematic task.)

Two different views about the importance of particular geographic characteristics in international relations emerged at the turn of the last century within the realist tradition. One view developed in the 1890s asserts that the state controlling the ocean routes controls the world.2 British power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was determined largely by its dominance on the seas, a power that allowed Britain to colonialize distant places. Control of key oceanic choke points —the Straits of Malacca, Gibraltar, and Hormuz; the Dardanelles; the Persian Gulf; and the Suez and Panama Canals—is viewed as a positive indicator of power potential.

In the early 1900s, a different view was proposed. The state that controlled the Eurasian "heartland" had the most power. As Halford Mackinder explained, "He who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland of Eurasia; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and who rules the World Island commands the world."3 More than any other country, Germany has acted to secure its power through its control of the heartland of Eurasia. The view that the Eurasian land mass is a source of power potential has been reprised—China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative discussed in Chapter 8 and the plan for roads, railways, pipelines, and cables across the Eurasia landmass illustrate that power potential.4 In both these views, geography helps to shape destiny.

But geographic power potential is magnified or constrained by natural resources, a second source of natural power potential. Petroleum-exporting states such as Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, which are geographically small but have a crucial natural resource, oil, have greater power potential than their sizes would suggest. States need oil and are ready to pay dearly for it, and they will even go to war when access to it is denied. States that have such valuable natural resources, regardless of their geographic size, can wield power over states that do not. The United States, Russia, and South Africa have vast power potential because of their diverse natural resources—oil, copper, bauxite, vanadium, gold, and

silver. Mainland China, which supplies over 95 percent of the demand for rare earth minerals that are essential in high-tech manufacturing, has been able to use its monopoly to deny access for political purposes and drive up prices. Yet China's monopoly is not assured as new mines in Australia, the United States, India, and Vietnam open. Even natural resource-based power may have its limits.

Of course, having a sought-after resource may prove a liability, making states targets for aggressive actions, as Kuwait learned in 1990, when Iraq invaded. Nor does the absence of natural resources mean that a state has no power potential; Japan is not rich in natural resources, but it has parlayed other elements of power potential to make itself an economic powerhouse.

With a population of 126 million in a land area the size of California, Japan has a power potential that can be understood through its vast economic influence. Here, Japanese-made cars are on sale in Germany, another country that is a top producer of automobiles.

*

Population is a third natural source of power potential. Sizable populations, such as those of China (1.4 billion people), India (1.3 billion), the United States (328 million), Indonesia (270 million), Brazil (211 million), and Russia (144 million), automatically give power potential, and often great power status, to a state. Although a large population produces a variety of goods and services, characteristics of that population (health status, age distribution, level of social services) may magnify or constrain state power. States with small, highly educated, skilled populations, such as Switzerland, Norway, Austria, and Singapore, can fill disproportionately large economic and political niches. States with large but relatively poor populations, such as Ethiopia, with 112 million people but a gross domestic product of only $857 per capita, can exercise less power. States with a declining population, like Russia, or a rapidly aging one, like South Korea and Japan, may in the future suffer from a decline in this natural source of power.

Both tangible and intangible sources can affect the degree to which these natural sources of power potential are translated into actual power. These sources are used to enhance, modify, or constrain power potential (see Figure 5.1).

FIGURE 5.1

Ingredients of State Power Potential

*

Tangible Sources of Power Potential

Industrial development, economic diversification, level of infrastructure, and characteristics of the military are critical tangible sources of power potential. With an advanced industrial capacity, a state's advantages and disadvantages of geography diminish, as illustrated by Japan. Air travel, for example, makes geographic expanse less of a barrier to commerce, yet at the same time, it makes even large states militarily vulnerable, as the United States recognizes. Industrialization modifies the importance of population, too. Large but poorly equipped armies are no match for armies with advanced equipment, as Egypt and Israel learned in wars beginning in the 1960s. Industrialized states generally have higher educational levels and more advanced technology, and they use capital more efficiently, all of which add to their power potential.

Intangible Sources of Power Potential

Intangible sources of power potential such as public support and morale, and the quality of government and leadership, may be as important as the tangible ones. First, the perception by other states of public support and cohesion is one intangible source of power. China's power was magnified during the leadership of Mao Zedong (who ruled from 1949 to 1976), when there appeared to be unprecedented public support for the communist leadership and a high degree of societal cohesion. A state government's actual support among its own population can also be a powerful mediator of state power. Israel's successful campaigns in the Middle East in the 1967 and 1973 wars can be attributed in large part to strong public

support, including the willingness of Israeli citizens to pay the cost and die for their country when necessary.

When that public support is absent, particularly in democracies, the power potential of the state diminishes. Witness the U.S. loss in the Vietnam War, when challenges to, and disagreement with, the war effort undermined military effectiveness. Loss of public support may also inhibit authoritarian systems. For example, in 2011, the mercenaries Muammar Qaddafi hired to fight to protect his government in Libya were not ready to die for the regime. They left with their arms, making their way to West African states like Mali, ready to fight for someone else another day.

Leadership is another source of intangible power. Visionaries and charismatic leaders, such as India's Mohandas Gandhi and Britain's Winston Churchill, were able to augment the power potential of their states by taking bold initiatives. Poor leaders, those who squander public resources and abuse the public's trust, such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Syria's Bashar al-Assad, diminish the state's power capability and its capacity to exert power over the long term.

People disagree, however, about the effectiveness of intangible sources of power. Realists might argue that such sources are ineffective compared to the coercive use of tangible sources of power. Liberals, who have a more expansive notion of power, would more than likely place greater importance on these intangible ingredients because several reflect domestic political processes. Constructivists recognize that power comes from tangible and intangible sources. But, they argue, it also comes from ideas and language. State identities and nationalism are forged and changed through socialization to certain ideas and the discourse used to talk about them.

Yet different combinations of the sources of power may produce different outcomes. The NATO alliance's victory over Slobodan Miloševi?'s Yugoslavian forces in 1999 and Libya in 2011 can be explained by the alliance's overwhelming natural sources of power coupled with its strong tangible sources of power. But how can we explain Afghanistan's victory over the Soviet Union in the early 1980s, the North Vietnamese victory

over the United States in the 1970s, or the decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan when fighting was still occurring? In each case, a country with limited natural and tangible sources of power prevailed over another with strong natural and tangible power resources. In these cases, the intangible sources of power, including the willingness of the populations to continue fighting against overwhelming odds, explain victory by the objectively weaker side.5

Hard versus Soft Power

Using hard power refers to a state's exploitation of the various sources of power to coerce other states into adopting actions in its interest. An alternative way to exert power is what Joseph S. Nye labeled soft power. Using soft power refers to a state's attempt to persuade other actors to do things it wants based on the legitimacy of its own actions, values, or policies.6 For example, the countries of Europe have set an example by working to adopt policies to address the issue of climate change. The hope is that other states will see the benefit and legitimacy of these actions and adopt similar mitigation policies. In 2020, China engaged in what became referred to as "mask diplomacy" by manufacturing and sending masks and other personal protective equipment to countries affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The Chinese media highlighted these efforts as a demonstration of the legitimacy of China's intentions vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

Success in projecting power often involves using a combination of the hard power of coercion and the soft power of persuasion and attraction. Nye refers to using such a combination of hard and soft power as smart power.7 As an example, Russia supplies almost half of all the natural gas imported by Italy. In January 2009, when Russia was in a dispute with Ukraine and cut off natural gas supplies to its pipelines (which bring natural gas to Europe), Italy faced significant shortages in the cold winter months. While no overt threat has been made, the potential coercive act of cutting off gas supplies gives Russia some possible leverage over Italy. Italy has since sought to diversify its natural gas imports, but the hard power potential for Russia is clearly there. Russia is also taking actions viewed as positive and legitimate to project

soft power vis-à-vis Italy. In the midst of the major coronavirus outbreak in Italy in March 2020, Russia sent Italy material to disinfect vehicles, buildings, and public spaces, as well as medical specialists and testing devices. Russia called the effort its "from Russia with love" campaign. Russia's provision of its effective COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries is another example. Taken together, we see smart power politics at work.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia sent masks to Italy and other nations to provide them with critical personal protective equipment during COVID-19 surges and to improve relations throughout the world. The Russian government dubbed this campaign "From Russia with Love."

*

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is true of the concept of "power"? It is always defined based on states' military capability.

It refers to the ability to influence others as well as control outcomes.

It refers to the ability to influence others, but not necessarily control outcomes.

It refers to the ability to control outcomes, but not necessarily influence others.

The influence that the United States wields by setting an example of a functioning democracy committed to civil and political rights is an illustration of soft power.

tangible power potential.

hard power.

natural power potential.

Glossary

power

the ability not only to influence others but also to control outcomes so as to produce results that would not have occurred naturally

power potential

a measure of the power an entity like a state could have, derived from a consideration of both its tangible and its intangible resources; states may not always be able to transfer their power potential into actual power

hard power

states using various sources of power (economic or military) to coerce other states into adopting actions in its interests

soft power

the power to attract states to change their behavior rather than having to coerce them into doing so; power is based on the legitimacy of the state's values or its policies

smart power

using a combination of the hard power of coercion with the soft power of persuasion and attraction

Endnotes

Note 02: Alfred T. Mahan, The Influence of Seapower upon History, 1660–1783 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897). Return to reference 2

Note 03: Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," Geographical Journal 23 (April 1904): 434. Return to reference 3

Note 04: Bruno Maçães, The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order (London: Penguin, 2019). Return to reference 4

Note 05: Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," World Politics 27:2 (January 1975): 175–200. Return to reference 5

Note 06: Joseph S. Nye Jr., Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Return to reference 6

Note 07: Joseph S. Nye Jr., The Future of Power (New York: Public Affairs, 2011). Return to reference 7

TOOLS OF STATECRAFT

States use a variety of techniques to exert influence and project their power in international relations. These techniques, referred to as statecraft, include diplomacy, economic statecraft, and the use of force. All three techniques require credibility on the part of the state that seeks to use them to exert influence. In other words, a state must have both the ability and the incentive to act using a certain policy in order for other states to believe that it will see it through. If it lacks either the ability or the incentive to carry out a stated policy, the policy is not a credible one. Other states are not likely to believe the state will actually act on the policy and will thus not change their behavior. The effects of the stated policy will be lost. However, if its policy choices are seen as credible by others, a state can potentially exert influence over other states using policies of diplomacy, economic statecraft, and/or force.

In a particular situation, a state may begin with one approach and then try several others to influence the intended target. In other cases, a state may use several different techniques simultaneously. The techniques that political scientists think states emphasize vary across the theoretical perspectives. In addition, different types of states may make different choices.

The Art of Diplomacy

In traditional diplomacy, representatives of state governments try to influence the behavior of other states through dialogue, negotiation, and other nonviolent means. Bargaining and negotiations are central in this type of statecraft.

According to Harold Nicolson, a British diplomat and writer, diplomacy usually begins with negotiation, through indirect or direct communication, in an attempt to reach agreement. Parties may conduct this negotiation tacitly or directly. In tacit bargaining, actions (as opposed to verbal statements or written proposals) are the critical means of communication. Each party recognizes that a move in one direction leads the other to respond in a way that is strategic. In more direct, formal negotiations, one side offers a proposal and the other responds. This process is generally repeated many times until the parties

reach a compromise. In both cases, reciprocity usually occurs, whereby each side responds to the other's moves or proposals in kind.

States seldom enter diplomatic bargaining or negotiations as power equals. Each state knows its own goals and power potential, of course, and has some idea of its opponent's goals and power potential, although information about the opponent may be imperfect, incomplete, or just wrong. Thus, although the outcome of negotiations is almost always mutually beneficial (if not, why bother?), that outcome is not likely to please the parties equally. And the satisfaction of each party may change as new information is revealed or as conditions change over time.

Bargaining and negotiations are complex processes, complicated by the fact that most states carry out two levels of bargaining simultaneously. The first level is international bargaining between states. The second level is bargaining between the state's negotiators and its various domestic constituencies, both to reach a negotiating position and to ratify the agreement. The negotiator is the formal link between these two levels of negotiation. The political scientist Robert Putnam refers to this as a "two-level game."8

The 2019 negotiations between the United States and Mexico over a new North American trade pact illustrate the two-level game. Each country conducted two sets of negotiations: one with the other state and the other within its own domestic political arena. A key sticking point between the two states was whether to include enforceable labor protection standards in the agreement. Negotiators representing the U.S. government had to mollify the opposition Democratic Party that controlled the U.S. House of Representatives and whose leaders were demanding strong labor standards in the agreement. Mexican negotiators had to satisfy the demands of their government and business leaders that were hesitant to accept strict labor standards. What makes the game unusually complex, according to Putnam, is that "moves that are rational for one player at one board … may be impolitic for that same player at the other board."9 For example, to move the agreement forward, U.S. trade negotiators could have dropped

their demand to have strong labor standards included in the agreement. However, Democratic Party leaders had made clear that they would not vote for an agreement without enforceable labor standard provisions. The agreement would have been acceptable to Mexico but not key political leaders in the United States. Without acceptance at both levels, an agreement cannot come about. Realists see the two-level game as constrained primarily by the structure of the international system, whereas liberals more readily acknowledge domestic pressures and incentives.

In a communication-linked world, public diplomacy is an increasingly popular diplomatic technique. Public diplomacy involves a country strategically targeting publics and elites in foreign countries with informational, cultural, and educational programming. For example, China's public diplomacy has used Confucius Institutes to promote Chinese language and culture, encourage educational exchanges, and develop English language media to reach international audiences. The end goal of public diplomacy is to create an image that enhances the advocating country's ability to achieve its diplomatic objectives by persuading the target country's government to adopt policies consistent with the advocating country's interests. Public diplomacy is an important example of a country's use of soft power.10

Bargaining and negotiation were crucial steps in bringing the United States, Mexico, and Canada to an agreement that all could sign on to in the USMCA. How did each state make compromises to get the others, and their own governments, to sign?

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Before and during the 2003 Iraq War, public diplomacy became a particularly useful diplomatic instrument. American administration officials lobbied friendly and opposing states, both directly in negotiations and indirectly through various media outlets, including independent Arab media such as the Qatar-funded Al Jazeera television network—the number-one news source for an estimated 55 percent of the Arab world. The U.S. Department of State also established the Middle East

Radio Network, comprising both Alhurra and Radio Sawa. Radio Sawa broadcasts both Western and Middle Eastern popular music with periodic news briefs. The more controversial Alhurra, begun in 2004, attracted much of the Iraqi market, and during the Arab Spring in Egypt, an estimated 25 percent of people living in Cairo and Alexandria listened to this news source. States in the communication age clearly have public diplomacy as a diplomatic policy instrument at their disposal. However, whether public diplomacy does change "hearts and minds" is debatable.

Both traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy are types of Track One diplomacy; they involve talks and negotiations among government officials or actions taken as official government policy. Track Two diplomacy is another type of diplomacy, but one that is not directly linked to the government of the states. It consists of individuals from outside the government engaging in informal diplomatic interactions with the aim of helping to resolve their conflict. The idea behind this type of diplomacy is that the absence of government officials who are supposed to defend their government's policy positions might lead to more open discussions with a greater likelihood of breaking through difficult impasses. It often complements Track One efforts and, in many cases, has helped facilitate those official talks. For example, the 1993 Oslo Accords, agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, were reached with the help of Track Two initiatives. Track Two meetings were held between nongovernmental influential elites and groups such as newspaper editors, academics, leaders of civil society groups, and students. These meetings, which helped to build a relationship between the two sides, to foster an understanding of the problems from the perspective of others, and to develop some possible substantive solutions, are widely credited with making the Oslo Accords possible.

While they can be effective, all types of diplomacy may often need more than just negotiations and persuading the public to change other states' behavior. Negotiators may find they need to use other measures of statecraft, including positive incentives (such as diplomatic recognition or foreign aid in

return for desired actions) and the threat of negative consequences (such as reduction or elimination of foreign aid, severance of diplomatic ties, or use of coercive force) if the target state continues to move in a specific direction. The tools of statecraft are not only diplomatic but also economic and military.

The liberal view is that talking, via all forms of diplomacy, is better than not talking to one's adversaries. Whatever the differences, liberals assert, discussion clarifies the issues, narrows differences, and encourages bargaining. Use of more forceful actions, like economic statecraft and military force, may make diplomacy less effective and should be a last resort.

Realists are more skeptical about the value of diplomacy. While they acknowledge that diplomacy has some benefits, realists tend to see state goals as inherently conflictual. Thus, to them, negotiations and diplomacy are apt to be effective only when backed by force, either economic or military.

Economic Statecraft

States use more than words to exercise power. They may use economic statecraft—both engagement (sometimes called positive sanctions) and sanctions (sometimes called negative sanctions)—to try to influence other states.11 Engaging another state involves offering a "carrot," enticing the target state to act in the desired way by rewarding moves it makes in the desired direction. The assumption is that positive incentives will lead the target state to change its behavior. Sanctions, however, may be imposed more often: a state may threaten to act, or actually take actions, to punish the target state for moves it makes in an undesired direction. The goal of using the "stick" (sanctions) may be to punish the target state for actions it has already taken or may be to try to change the future behavior of the target state. Table 5.1 provides examples of both positive engagement and negative sanctions.

TABLE 5.1

Instruments of Economic Statecraft

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

THE ACTIVITY

EXAMPLE

Give the target state trading privileges as an incentive for policy change.

The EU's Everything but Arms initiative gives duty-free and quota-free market access to least developed countries (for almost everything but armaments) as long as basic human rights and labor rights conventions are followed.

Allow sensitive trade with target state, including militarily useful equipment.

France exports military equipment to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt to build positive alliances in the region, despite their repressive political tactics.

Give corporations investment guarantees or tax breaks as incentives to invest in target state.

The United States offered insurance to U.S. companies willing to invest in post-apartheid South Africa.

Allow importation of target state's products into your country at best tariff rates.

Industrialized states allow imports from developing countries at lower tariff rates.

NEGATIVE SANCTIONS

THE SANCTION

EXAMPLE

Prohibit certain financial transactions.

The United States prohibited financial institutions from purchasing bonds from Russian institutions in 2021.

Freeze target state's assets.

The United States froze Iranian assets during 1979 hostage crisis; Islamic State and al-Nusra Front assets, 2014 to present.

Arms embargo.

South Africa, 1977–94, in reaction to apartheid regime; North Korea, 2006 to present, in reaction to its military developments.

Export or import limits of selected technology and products.

Côte d'Ivoire (ban on diamonds, a significant source of income for violent groups), 2004–14; Somalia (ban on charcoal industry, the main source of income for al-Shabaab), 2012 to present.

Comprehensive sanctions.

U.S. sanctions against Myanmar, 1997–2016, to isolate military junta ruling the country; U.S. sanctions reimposed on Myanmar in 2021 after military government killed civilians; U.S. sanctions against Iraq, 1990–2003, to pressure regime to dismantle weapons of mass destruction.

Since the mid-1990s, states have increasingly imposed smart sanctions, including freezing assets of governments and/or individuals and imposing sanctions on commodities (e.g., oil, timber, or diamonds). Targeting has involved not just "what" but also "who"; the international community has tried to affect specific individuals and rebel groups, reduce ambiguity and loopholes, and avoid the high humanitarian costs of general sanctions. Despite these modifications, liberals are still wary of sanctions, believing instead that diplomacy is a more effective way for states to achieve international goals. Realist theorists, on the other hand, believe it is necessary in exercising power to resort to, or threaten to use, sanctions or force more regularly.

A state's ability to use these instruments of economic statecraft depends on its power potential. States with a variety of power sources have more instruments at their disposal. Clearly, only economically well-endowed countries can offer investment guarantees, grant preferences to specific countries, house foreign assets, grant licenses, or boycott effectively.

Some liberals, however, argue that developing states do have some leverage in economic statecraft under special circumstances. If a state or group of states controls a key resource whose production is limited, their power is

strengthened. Among the primary commodities, petroleum has this potential, and it gave the Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) the ability to impose oil sanctions on the United States and the Netherlands when those two countries strongly supported Israel in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

The ability of sanctions to alter a target state's behavior appears mixed. South Africa illustrates a case of relative success in the use of economic sanctions. When the Reagan administration's "constructive engagement" policy failed to work, the U.S. Congress approved harsh sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime in 1986, over a presidential veto. Under the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, the United States joined with other countries and the United Nations, which had already imposed economic sanctions. In 1992, the white-controlled South African regime announced a political opening that led to the end of apartheid and white-minority rule. Most commentators conclude that sanctions probably had an important effect on the regime's decision to change policy, but that was not the sole explanation.

Economic statecraft does not always lead to the intended outcome. In 1960, the United States imposed an economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba, designed to punish the communist regime under Fidel Castro and encourage a change in government. Despite these sanctions, the longest trade embargo in history, a transition from authoritarianism has never taken place. Concluding that the sanctions had not worked, the Obama administration began a new era of positive engagement in late 2014. Talking with Cuba's leaders and bureaucrats, reopening the U.S. embassy in Havana, and using executive power to loosen a host of travel and commercial restrictions, including removing Cuba from the list of states sponsoring terrorism, would begin the engagement process. While only Congress can lift the economic embargo, the Obama administration embarked on a totally different strategy, to the consternation of some Florida-based older Cubans and many Republicans. In 2017, the Trump administration announced that it would reverse this positive engagement process, and sanctions slowly ramped up,

but the Cuban government and policies had still not changed. In 2021, with a new U.S. administration and the resignation of Raúl Castro as head of the Communist Party, changes in the relationship may be forthcoming as Cuba experiences food shortages and economic dislocation.

We can also see ambiguous results in the sanctions the European Union and the United States imposed against Russia in 2014. These sanctions were in response to Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its support of separatists in Ukraine. The Russian economy shrank in early 2015 by 2 percent, losing $26.8 billion in value. The sanctions were renewed multiple times over the next several years. Russian officials acknowledged "meaningful" economic harm but maintained that the price was worth it. They would continue to support Ukrainian separatists, even if sanctions adversely affected their economy. However, in 2020, Ukraine and Russia agreed to a ceasefire, but like the other ceasefires, this one, too, broke down. Tensions further escalated between Russia and Ukraine in 2021. As a result of this increased hostility, Russia's involvement in the U.S. elections, and its implementation of a widespread cyberattack, the United States and Europe strengthened sanctions against Russia by limiting its financial transactions and expelling Russian diplomats.

Sanctions the United States and the European Union took against Iran and its petrochemical and oil industries in 2011–13, designed to cut off that country from the international financial system, produced clear results. Iran experienced an estimated $9 billion loss every quarter, leading to a dramatic decline in the value of its currency and weakening the Iranian economy. This decline directly affected the population, which experienced shortages in all sectors. Those effects and the promise to lift those sanctions may have led Iran to the negotiating table in 2014–15, although we cannot prove the cause or the reason for the final agreement.

However, using sanctions effectively is still difficult. When the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, the Europeans refused to follow suit. They developed a new pay processing system

called INSTEX so that European companies could still trade with Iran, thereby circumventing U.S. sanctions.

So how successful are sanctions as a tool of statecraft? The question that must first be answered is what constitutes an actual "success" or "failure." If success is defined as total or partial capitulation by the target country, around 27 percent of sanctions cases resulted in success. If success is defined more broadly to include bringing about negotiated settlements, about 41 percent of sanctions resulted in success.12 But looking at only success discounts an important issue—that sanctions can actually have negative unintended consequences. Studies have shown that sanctions can prompt greater state repression in the target country, can exacerbate health and humanitarian crises, as illustrated in Iran when it could not import critical medical supplies, and can lead to greater government corruption.13 Companies and third-party states also figure out ways to circumvent sanctions: some legally as the Europeans have pursued with INSTEX; some illegal and corrupt. In the profitable energy markets, transferring oil mid-ocean, faking shipping logs, and hiring ships with fake or untraceable registries are all crimes used to circumvent sanctions to the profit of others.14

These findings suggest that while sanctions are typically viewed as a cheaper and easier tool for coercion and punishment than the use of armed force, they may be effective only in limited cases, and in some, might even be counterproductive. These outcomes have led realist theorists to conclude that states must use the threat of force to achieve their objective of changing the behavior of another state.

The Use of Force

Force (and the threat of force) is another critical instrument of statecraft and is central to realist thinking. As with economic statecraft, a state may use force or the threat of force either to get a target state to do something or to undo something that state has already done—compellence—or to keep an adversary from doing something in the future—deterrence.15

With the strategy of compellence, a state threatens to use force to try to get another state to do something or to undo an act it

has undertaken. An excellent example is the prelude to the 2003 Iraq War, when the United States and others threatened Saddam Hussein that if certain actions were not taken, then war would follow. Threats began when George W. Bush labeled Iraq a member of the "axis of evil," and escalated when the United Nations found Iraq to be in material breach of a UN resolution. Then in March 2003, Great Britain, one of the coalition partners, gave Iraq ten days to comply with the UN resolution. On March 17, the last compellent threat was issued: President George W. Bush gave Saddam's Baathist regime 48 hours to leave Iraq as its last chance to avert war. In the end, it was necessary to resort to an invasion because compellence via an escalation of threats failed.

With the strategy of deterrence, states commit themselves to punishing a target state if that state takes an undesired action. Threats of actual war are used as an instrument of policy to dissuade a state from pursuing certain courses of action. If the target state does not take the undesired action, deterrence is successful and conflict is avoided. If it does choose to act, despite the deterrent threat, then the first state will presumably deliver a devastating blow.

Since the advent of nuclear weapons in 1945, deterrence has taken on a special meaning. Today, if a state chooses to resort to violence against a nuclear state, nuclear weapons might be launched against it in retaliation. If this happens, the cost of the aggression will be unacceptable, especially if both states have nuclear weapons—the viability of both societies would be at stake. Theoretically, states that recognize the destructive capability of nuclear weapons will therefore be hesitant to take aggressive action. It is difficult for a state to know with absolute certainty that it could annihilate its adversary's nuclear capability in one go (the ability to do so is called first-strike capability). Even the possibility that the adversary could respond with its second-strike capability would result in restraint. Deterrence is then successful.

For either compellence or deterrence to be effective, states must lay the groundwork. They must clearly and openly communicate their objectives and capabilities, be willing to make good on threats or fulfill promises, and have the capacity

to follow through with their commitments. In short, a state's credibility is essential for compellence and deterrence. Yet this is not a one-sided, unilateral process. It is a strategic interaction in which the behavior of each state is determined not only by each state's own behavior but also by the actions and responses of the other.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESStatecraft: A View from Israel

Since Israel was established in 1948, military statecraft and diplomacy have been key features of its foreign policy approach. The day following its recognition as a state, the first Arab-Israeli conflict began—a war fought against Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, among others. The war, for Israel, was a fight for its very existence. After a year of conflict, the map of Israel was redrawn and its borders extended.

Over the following decade, Israel often used military statecraft to achieve its interests. In 1950, Egypt blocked Israeli shipping access to the Straits of Tiran. Israel responded in 1956, invading Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. While Israel was eventually forced to withdraw, it did so on the promise that Egypt would allow access to the vital waterway. But in May 1967, Egypt announced that it would again close the straits to Israeli shipping and mobilized military forces on its border with Israel. In June, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, arguing that Egypt was preparing to attack. The result was the Six Day War, which was fought between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, with troops and arms contributed to the Arab countries by several others. The result of this war was another significant expansion of Israeli borders to include territory formerly held by Egypt (Sinai and Gaza), Jordan (the West Bank), and Syria (the Golan Heights). Military statecraft had enabled Israel to assert its rights and expand control over new territories. These new 1967 borders, won by a victorious military, however, only exacerbated the conflict between Israel and its neighbors.

Diplomacy has also been central to Israel's foreign policy. Following years of conflict and after intense negotiations, Israel signed a peace agreement with Egypt in 1979. The treaty

specified that there would be mutual recognition, the end to the state of war that existed between them since 1948, and a normalization of relations between them. Each state offered concessions: Israel, for its part, agreed to withdraw its forces from the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt agreed not to militarize the area. Egypt also agreed to allow the Straits of Tiran to be international waters to which Israel was entitled access.

In 1994, Israel also reached a peace agreement with Jordan, normalizing their relations and fixing the borders. Agreements were concluded over a range of issues: crime and drugs, culture, science, tourism, health, and the environment. Both countries recognized economic cooperation as a key pillar of peace, and they have since negotiated a bilateral trade agreement along with several other bilateral agreements.

Diplomacy has also been used vis-à-vis Palestine. In the early 1990s, notable rounds of negotiations between Israeli leaders and leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) took place. They resulted in the Oslo Accords in 1993, when the PLO agreed to formally recognize the state of Israel and, in return, Israel would allow a degree of autonomy and self-governance to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The agreements also laid out a timetable for the Middle East peace process—viewed as a first step toward a formal peace treaty.

Prior to 2020, most Arab states, except Jordan and Egypt, had stated a necessary condition for the normalization of relations between themselves and Israel: a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine where each would have their own territory and state. However, that position began to change as Iran amassed power and posed a regional threat. Several Arab countries including the UAE and Bahrain “shifted away from seeing Israel as the oppressor in its conflict with the Palestinians and instead view it as a valuable partner in trade, security and their rivalry with Iran.”a In 2020, with a push from the United States under the Trump administration’s attempt to bring peace to the long-troubled region, the UAE, followed by Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, engaged in a normalization of relations with Israel even absent a two-state solution. These agreements were not only in Israel’s interest in

substantive terms but also achieved another of its interests—building ties with other Arab countries without having to make concessions to the Palestinians. The hope on the part of the Arab countries, however, was that the new diplomatic ties would provide them with leverage over Israel to rein in aggressive actions against the Palestinians. The conflict that broke out between Israel and Palestine in May 2021 thus put a strain on Israel's relationship with these Arab countries. As one Emirati political scientist said, "Israel right now is putting its friends and partners, including the U.A.E., in a difficult situation." It might "take us back to square zero."b Israel and Palestine agreed to a ceasefire after eleven days of fighting. However, in the wake of the conflict, the future of Israel's relations with the Arab states, as well as the Palestinians, is unclear.

Leaders from Israel, the United States, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates celebrate after signing an agreement to soften state stances against Israel.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What type of statecraft do you think has been the most effective for Israel in achieving its interests in the past? Why?

Do you think that same method of statecraft will be effective for Israel moving forward? Why or why not?

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Compellence and deterrence can fail, however. If they do, states may go to war. But even during war, states have choices. They choose the type of weaponry (nuclear or nonnuclear, strategic or tactical, conventional or cyber), the kind of targets (military or civilian, urban or rural), and the geographic location to be targeted (city, state, region). They may choose to respond in kind, to escalate, or to de-escalate.

Which of these policies to adopt—as well as the broader question of whether to use diplomatic, economic, or military strategies when engaging with other states—is a strategic

choice states must make. It is therefore important to understand how these foreign policy decisions are made.

Check Your Understanding

The set of strategies a state can make vis-à-vis other states is know as compellence.

public diplomacy.

statecraft.

engagement.

Which of the following activities is an example of public diplomacy? the national security adviser trying to improve the image of the United States by appearing on the Arabic TV network, Al Jazeera

the U.S. secretary of defense briefing foreign leaders

conducting an opinion poll

holding a televised summit of foreign business leaders

Glossary

statecraft

techniques states use to exert influence and project power including diplomacy, economic, and use of force tools

credibility

the quality of having both the ability and incentive to act using a certain policy such that other states believe it will be carried out

diplomacy

the practice of states trying to influence the behavior of other states by bargaining, negotiating, taking specific noncoercive actions or refraining from such actions, or appealing to the foreign public for support of a position

public diplomacy

use of certain diplomatic methods to create a favorable image of the state or its people in the eyes of other states and their

publics; methods include, for example, goodwill tours, cultural and student exchanges, and media presentations

Track One diplomacy

negotiations among government officials taken on behalf of governments

Track Two diplomacy

unofficial overtures by private individuals or groups from outside governments to try and resolve an ongoing international crisis or civil war

engagement

getting a target state to act in a desired way by rewarding the moves it makes in the desired direction; often referred to as positive sanctions

sanctions

economic, diplomatic, and even coercive military force used to enforce an international policy or another state's policy; sanctions can be positive (offering an incentive to a state) or negative (punishing a state)

smart sanctions

limited sanctions targeted to hurt or support specific groups; used to avoid the humanitarian costs of general sanctions

compellence

the use of threats to coerce another into taking an action it otherwise would not take

deterrence

the policy of maintaining a large military force and arsenal to discourage any potential aggressor from taking action

Endnotes

Note 08: Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," International Organization 42:3 (Summer 1988): 427–69. Return to reference 8

Note 09: Putnam, “Two-Level Games,” 434. Return to reference 9

Note 10: See Eleanor Albert, “China’s Big Bet on Soft Power,” Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, February 9, 2018, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-big-bet-soft-power (accessed 1/8/21). Return to reference 10

Note 11: David A. Baldwin, Economic Statecraft (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985). Return to reference 11

Note 12: T. Clifton Morgan, Navin Bapat, and Yoshiharu Kobayashi, “Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions 1945–2005: Updating the TIES Database,” Conflict Management and Peace Science 31:5 (2014): 541–58. Return to reference 12

Note 13: Dursun Peksen, “When Do Imposed Economic Sanctions Work? A Critical Review of the Sanctions Effectiveness Literature,” Defence and Peace Economics 30:6 (2019): 635–47. Return to reference 13

Note 14: “Sanctions Inc.: Hide and Seek,” The Economist, May 18, 2019, 52–53. Return to reference 14

Note 15: Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966). Return to reference 15

Note a: Ronen Bergman and Ben Hubbard, “Israel Calls It an Alliance. To Emiratis, It’s Not Such a Big Deal,” New York Times, June 26, 2020. Return to reference a

Note b: Quote from Abdulkhaleq Abdulla. Quoted in Malsin, Jared and Nazih Osseiran, “Israel’s Conflict in Gaza Tests Limits of New Detente with Arab World,” The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 2021. Return to reference b

MODELS OF FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING

How do states actually make specific foreign policy decisions? How do they decide which instruments of statecraft to use? Differences depend in part on domestic politics—how we view subnational actors—state leaders, the mass public, interest groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses. But decisions also depend on numerous other

factors: the goals of a state's foreign policy, the structure of the political system, the other actors in the international system, as well as the relative importance of domestic versus international factors. How do the different perspectives view the decision-making process?

The Rational Model: The Realist Approach

Most policy makers—particularly during crises—and most realists begin with the rational model, which conceives of foreign policy as actions the national government chooses to maximize its strategic objectives. Under the rational model, the state is assumed to be a unitary actor with established goals, a set of possible policy options, and an algorithm for deciding which option best meets its goals. The process is relatively straightforward. Taking as our case the 1996 incident in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) tested missiles by launching them over the Republic of China (ROC; Taiwan), a rational approach would view Taiwan's decision-making process about how to respond in the following manner (the numbers correspond to the numbered steps in Figure 5.2):

The PRC was testing missiles over the ROC in direct threat to the latter's national security.

The goal of both the ROC and its major supporter, the United States, was to stop the firings immediately.

The ROC decision makers had several options: do nothing; wait until after the upcoming elections; issue diplomatic protests; bring the issue to the UN Security Council; threaten or conduct military operations against the PRC; or threaten or use economic statecraft (cut trade, impose sanctions or embargoes).

The ROC leaders analyzed the benefits and costs of these options: doing nothing would suggest that the missile testing was acceptable; the PRC would exercise its veto in the UN Security Council; any economic or military actions the ROC undertook were unlikely to be successful against the stronger adversary, potentially leading to the destruction of Taiwan.

The ROC weighed these costs against the possible benefits of each policy, and chose the one with the most benefits relative

to costs. With U.S. support, it chose diplomatic protest as a first step.

FIGURE 5.2

The Rational Model of Decision Making

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Crises such as this have a unique set of characteristics: decision makers are confronted by a surprising, threatening event; they have only a short time to make a decision about how to respond; often a limited number of decision makers are involved in top-secret proceedings; and there is little time for substate actors to have much influence. In these circumstances, using the rational model as a way to assess the other side's behavior is an appropriate choice.

In a noncrisis situation, when a state knows very little about the internal domestic processes of another state—as the United States knew little about mainland China during the era of Mao Zedong—decision makers have little alternative but to assume that the other state will follow the rational model. Indeed, in the absence of better information, most U.S. assessments of decisions the Soviet Union took during the Cold War were based on a rational model. Only after the opening of the Soviet governmental archives following the end of the Cold War did historians find that, in fact, the Soviets had no concrete plans for turning Poland, Hungary, Romania, or other East European states into communist dictatorships or socialist economies, as the United States had believed. The Soviets appear to have been guided by events happening in the region, not by specific ideological goals and rational plans.16 The United States was incorrect in imputing the rational model to Soviet decision making, but in the absence of complete information, this was the least risky approach: the anarchy of the international system means a state assumes that its opponent engages in rational decision making.

The Organizational, Bureaucratic, and Pluralist Models: The Liberal Approaches

The rational model, which is the typical decision-making model from the realist approach, focuses on outside stimuli

that drive decision making of a unitary state actor. But domestic actors may be central, as the liberal perspective would argue. The organizational process model and bureaucratic politics model capture the impact that departments or ministries of government can have. Decisions can also be influenced by other domestic sources (the public, interest groups, mass movements, and multinational corporations), as captured by the pluralist model. (See Figure 5.3 for a summary of the three models.) The first two cases—the organizational process and bureaucratic politics models—highlight the role that subnational governmental organizations and bureaucracies can play in influencing foreign policy decisions. The organizational process model emphasizes different government organizations' standard operating procedures (SOPs) and routines. Decisions arising from organizational processes depend heavily on precedent, which is used to develop the organization's SOPs. However, different organizations have different missions within the government and issues rarely fall neatly into one organization's jurisdiction; they cut across different organizations' areas of operation. This can result in inconsistent policies at the state level with different organizations following their different SOPs, leading to different actions being adopted by the organizations. For example, during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, inconsistent SOPs of different Soviet bureaucracies were blamed as the reason that the United States was able to discover the missiles they placed in Cuba. Soviet military intelligence, whose SOP focused on maintaining secrecy, was responsible for the transport of the missiles. However, the Air Defense Command was charged with building the base to house the missiles. For this organization, building the base was part of an organizational routine just like any base construction. The organization therefore did not think to hide the missiles during the construction process. The United States was thus able to discover them.

FIGURE 5.3

The Bureaucratic/Organizational and Pluralist Models of Decision Making

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The bureaucratic politics model focuses on negotiations among individuals that head various organizations within the government representing different interests. The interests they represent are determined by where in the government they are located. “Where you sit influences what you see and where you stand.”17 According to this model, decisions are made from the tug-of-war among different departments, groups, or individuals representing different interests within the government. Rather than being a rational decision, the ultimate policy choice depends on the relative strength of the relevant bureaucratic players. Trade and environmental policy are prominent examples of the bureaucratic politics model of decision making at work. Bureaucracies in the ministries of agriculture, industry, and labor in the case of trade policy, and environment, economics, and labor in the case of environmental policy, fight particularly hard within their own governments for policies favorable to their constituencies. What a state’s trade policy or environmental policy looks like depends on which of these ministries has greater power in the process of negotiating a policy decision. The decisions reached are thus not always the most rational ones; rather, the groups are content with satisficing—that is, settling for a decision that is a minimally acceptable solution, even if that decision is not the best possible outcome.

The third case—the pluralist model—focuses on the fact that societal groups may play very important roles in the foreign policies adopted by states and captures decision-making processes involving these actors. Societal groups have a variety of ways of forcing favorable decisions or constraining adverse decisions. They can mobilize the media and public opinion, lobby the government agencies responsible for making decisions, influence the appropriate representative bodies (e.g., the U.S. Congress, the French National Assembly, the Japanese National Diet), organize transnational networks of people with comparable interests, and, in the case of high-profile heads of multinational corporations, make direct contacts with the highest governmental officials. No one doubts the power of the rice farmer lobbies in both Japan and South Korea in preventing the importation of cheap U.S.-grown rice. No one doubts the power of the Minerals Council

of Australia in Australia's work to secure tariff reductions for coal in its negotiation of free trade agreements with China, Japan, and South Korea. The pluralist model reflects these diverse societal interests and strategies.

Liberals especially turn to these models of decision making in their analyses because, for them, the state is only the playing field. For liberals, the places to look to explain policy decisions are the organizations, the competing interests within the government, and sometimes within society itself.

Constructivist Alternatives

Constructivists hold that foreign policy decisions are based on two major factors. First is the country's strategic culture: the decision makers' interpretation of a country's historical experience, including philosophies, values, institutions, and understandings of its geography and development. Australia's strategic culture encompasses the geography-history trade-off: whether policy should be set by Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific, or by its historic ties with Britain and the English-speaking world. Canada's strategic culture is shaped by its search for independence from the United States, an effort that is made somewhat problematic because of the United States and Canada's geographic proximity and economic interdependence.18

Second is the leaders' interpretation of international norms. Foreign policy decisions are determined by leaders' beliefs that their actions are congruent with the international norms they have appropriated. However, because states' domestic situations and cultures differ, the norms to which different states become socialized will not necessarily be the same. As a result, policies are likely to differ. For example, Australia supported the 2003 Iraq War while Canada did not. Drawing on their different domestic cultures, Canadian and Australian leaders made different choices. Canadian leaders were socialized to international norms of the peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation and multilateral institutions. Australian leaders were more focused on international norms of following pledges made in great power alliances. They thus supported the United States in its rejection of multilateral

institutions as a means for ending the conflict. In both cases, however, the international norms identified by leaders were an important source of their policy choices. In short, constructivists take a holistic view of decision making, in which the domestic and international factors are enmeshed.

Each of these models of foreign policy decision making—the rational, organizational process, bureaucratic politics, pluralist, and constructivist models—provides a window into how groups (both governmental and nongovernmental) influence the foreign policy process. They help us understand the complex process of where foreign policies come from and help to explain why states choose different forms of statecraft.

THEORY IN BRIEF

The State and Foreign Policy

Realism

Liberalism

Constructivism

Using State Power

Emphasis on coercive techniques of power; use of force acceptable

Broad range of power techniques; preference for noncoercive alternatives

Power is tool of elites for socializing societies through norms

How Foreign Policy Is Made

Emphasis on rational model of decision making; unitary state actor assumed once decision is made

Bureaucratic/organizational and pluralist models of decision making

Decisions based on norms and strategic culture that regulate policy sectors

Determinants of Foreign Policy

Largely external/international determinants

Largely domestic determinants

External determinants in combination with domestic civil society

Check Your Understanding

Force (and the threat of force) is central to _____ thinking. diplomatic

realist

liberal

constructivist

The pluralist model highlights the importance of _____ in foreign policy decision making. diverse societal interests

cost-benefit analyses

standard operating procedures

negotiations among bureaucracies with different interests

Glossary

organizational process model

the foreign policy decision-making model that posits that national decisions are the products of subnational governmental organizations and units which follow the standard operating procedures and processes of the organizations

bureaucratic politics model

the model of foreign policy decision making that posits that national decisions are the outcomes of bargaining among bureaucratic groups having competing interests; decisions reflect the relative strength of the individual bureaucratic players or of the organizations they represent

satisficing

in decision-making theory, the tendency of states and their leaders to settle for the minimally acceptable solution, not the best possible outcome, in order to reach a consensus and formulate a policy

pluralist model

a model of foreign policy making that focuses on the role that societal groups play in influencing national decisions

Endnotes

Note 16: Norman M. Naimark, The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Return to reference 16

Note 17: Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," World Politics 24 (Spring 1972): 40–79. Return to reference 17

Note 18: Brendon O'Connor and Srdjan Vucetic, "Another Mars-Venue Divide? Why Australia Said 'Yes' and Canada Said 'Non' to Involvement in the 2003 Iraq War," Australian Journal of International Affairs 64:5 (November 2010): 526–48. Return to reference 18

CHALLENGES TO THE STATE

The state, despite its centrality in international affairs, is facing challenges from religiously and ideologically based transnational movements, ethnonational movements, transnational crime, and fragile states. In each of these processes, new and intrusive technologies—e-mail, social media, camera phones, direct satellite broadcasting, and worldwide television networks such as CNN and Al Jazeera—increasingly undermine the state's control over information and hence its control over its citizens, nongovernmental groups, and their activities. Both the Persian Gulf states and China have fought battles trying to "protect" their populations from either crass Western values or dangerous political ideas transmitted through modern media. These new communication technologies have facilitated the organization of transnational and ethnonational movements and transnational crime, in many cases posing a challenge to the authority of states.

Transnational Religious and Ideological Movements

Transnational movements, particularly religious and ideological movements, have become political forces in their

own right. Different religions have always existed, and their current numbers reveal the diversity (2.4 billion Christians; 1.9 billion Muslims; 1.2 billion Hindus; 506 million Buddhists; 14.7 million Jews). What has changed is that increasing democratization has emerged as a by-product of globalization, providing an opening for members of the same religion to organize transnationally and therefore increase their political influence. Now that groups can communicate with their adherents and compete for political power both within states and transnationally, some of them, antisecular and antimodern, pose stark challenges to state and international authorities.19 More than 20 years ago, political scientist Samuel Huntington predicted that the next great international conflict would be a "clash of civilizations" arising from underlying differences between Western liberal democracy and Islamic fundamentalism.20 But he never predicted how complex those religious and political divides would become.

Extremist Islamic fundamentalism poses both a religious and an ideological threat. Although Islamic extremists come from many different countries and support different strategies for reaching their end goal, they are united in their belief that political and social authority should be based in the Koran. This movement presents a critique of many secular states and a solution that calls for radical state transformation. Islamic extremists see a long-standing discrepancy between the political and economic aspirations of states and the actual conditions of uneven economic distribution and rule by corrupt elites. Extremist groups advocate violence as the means to overthrow these corrupt rulers and install religious authority steeped in Sharia law.

The fight by the Afghans and their Islamic supporters against the Soviet Union in the 1980s proved to be a galvanizing event for extremist Islamic fundamentalism. It brought together religiously committed yet politically and economically disaffected young Islamists from all over the world. Fighting the "godless" enemy forged group cohesion and fighting the better-equipped Soviet military allowed them to hone their guerrilla tactics. These mujahideen (holy warriors) gained confidence by beating the Soviets into retreat. When they

returned to their homelands in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other parts of the Middle East, they were imbued with a mission—to wage jihad (holy war) against what they viewed as illegitimate regimes. During the fight in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national, emerged as a charismatic leader. When the Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan in 1996, bin Laden and what remained of the mujahideen formed Al Qaeda. As we will see in Chapter 6, Al Qaeda is just one of many Islamic fundamentalist groups, although its successful terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, made it one of the most widely known. While Al Qaeda has steadily lost popular support,21 it continues to evolve and extend its reach, still calling for attacks against the United States and other international targets.

What few commentators would have predicted is how the Sunni-Shia divide within Islam would become politicized and violent, affecting virtually all the conflicts in the Middle East today. Theologically, the divide is over who was the legitimate successor to the Prophet Muhammad. The divisions have existed for centuries, but violence among individuals was not significant. The 1979 Iranian Shiite revolution and the 2003 invasion of Iraq empowered majority Shiites over the Arab Sunni minority and caused the sectarian division to become political. It is the Islamic State (IS) that took the Shiites and moderate Sunnis to task. Announcing the formation of a new caliphate in 2014, the IS captured territory in Iraq and, joined by foreign fighters from more than 80 countries, established a capital in war-torn Syria. The IS rapidly became a powerful force, trying to bring grandeur, authority, and stability to the caliphate by capturing territory, exploiting resources in that territory to gain economic support, and establishing governance—with a strict legal system bringing swift justice to offenders and an educational and social service system. Instead of achieving these goals, however, it has killed those who oppose strict application of Islamic law, Shiites, and "infidels," nonbelievers from the West. In many areas of the Middle East, its influence has declined, though splinter groups have seen a resurgence, particularly in Africa's Sahel region.

Extremist Islamic fundamentalists, exemplified by the IS, are only a very small proportion of the more than 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide, and the IS has lost much of the territory it controlled in Iraq and Syria. However, extremist Islamic fundamentalism is still a powerful transnational movement and a challenge to states not only in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, and Yemen) but also in Africa (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Algeria, Mozambique, and Libya) and Asia (the Philippines and Indonesia). In Nigeria, for example, Boko Haram, whose name means "Western ways are forbidden," is a radical Islamist guerrilla group fighting the Nigerian military in the north. Since 2014, the group has kidnapped more than 2,000 women and children, killed aid workers, and perpetuated violence in villages in northern Borno State. By controlling four of the regions' ten zones, Boko Haram has undermined the people's confidence in their government's ability to protect them while expanding its reach into neighboring countries.

Other extremist religious groups have also posed problems for state authority, though their small numbers have not meant a direct challenge to the state itself. These include both Christian extremist groups operating in the United States, like the one affiliated with Timothy McVeigh, who was responsible for the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing in 1995, and ultra-Orthodox Jewish extremist individuals and groups in Israel and the West Bank. The latter are motivated by several factors: some are responding to the actions of the Israeli government, which has forced them to abandon illegal settlements; others seek revenge for Palestinian killings of Israelis; and still others are voicing opposition to social trends, as exemplified by the 2015 stabbings during the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade. Not all transnational movements pose such direct challenges to the state. Indeed, many movements, rather than forming around major cleavages such as religion or ideology, develop around progressive goals such as the environment, human rights, and development, or around conservative goals such as opposition to abortion, family planning, or immigration. Often spurred by nongovernmental organizations that frame the issue and mobilize resources, these social movements want change, develop new approaches to problems, and push governments

to take action. However, these movements do not generally undermine state sovereignty; what they seek are changes in policies in the state.

Ethnonational Movements

Another dramatic challenge to the state is found in ethnonational movements. The end of the Cold War witnessed the demise of multiethnic states, such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and the formation of many ethnonationalists into their own states. The Kazaks, the Serbs, and the Albanian Kosovars all found a home in their own states. The success of these groups, facilitated by the communications revolution of cell phones and the Internet, led to increasing demands for sovereignty by other ethnonational movements. While the demands differ in degree and kind, each poses a threat to the viability and sovereignty of established states.

One of the more complex ethnonational movements with international implications involves Kashmir—a mountainous area at the intersection of India, Pakistan, and China. Since the end of British colonial rule in 1947, the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir has been claimed by both Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Several wars and regular violence plagued the region for decades. Kashmir was divided in 1972 by a 450-mile Line of Control. India administers Kashmir to the east and south of the line, and Pakistan administers Kashmir to the north and west, with hundreds of thousands of troops stationed on each side. While India had granted its part of Kashmir a degree of autonomy, ethnonationalist Kashmiri separatists have been fighting India for control over the territory for decades.

In August 2019, India revoked Kashmir's autonomy, cut off Internet and cell phone access in the region, and sent military troops in to lock down the area in the expectation of potentially violent resistance. Kashmir has been in turmoil since then, leading to clashes between security forces and residents. Almost 4,000 were arrested by Indian forces in the first month alone after the August 2019 revocation of autonomy, illustrating the scale of the crackdown. Yet violence has continued. In March and April 2020, 50 people (including

militants, armed forces, and civilians) were killed as a result of the conflict. In February 2021, a report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) grimly predicted that violence along the border was likely to continue and that bilateral efforts to resolve the conflict were unlikely. Most are hopeful those predictions will prove to be wrong.

Kashmir, 2020

Note: The Line of Control separates the two sides in the Kashmir conflict.

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Ethnonationalist movements pose a challenge even to the strongest states. China has been confronted by ethnic uprisings within the Muslim Uighur minority in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, its northwesternmost province, over the past several decades. Today, Xinjiang (a name the Uighurs find offensive), which makes up one-sixth of China's land area, is home to 20 million people and 13 ethnic groups. Of these, 45 percent are Uighurs and 40 percent are ethnic Han. The Uighurs migrated to the Chinese border region from the Mongolian steppe in the tenth century. They are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group that follows Sufi Islam, a branch of Sunni Islam. Their diaspora is centered in this area, but Uighurs also live in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, with smaller numbers in Mongolia and Afghanistan. They have a long history of fighting for independence as Uighuristan or East Turkestan.

When vast mineral and oil deposits were found in Xinjiang in the 1950s, Han Chinese began to move into the region at the urging of the government, which promised the settlers infrastructure and jobs. But to the Uighurs, the ethnic Han Chinese migrants are colonists, and they believe the official Han policies are stifling the Uighur Islamic faith, traditional language, and economic prosperity.

Following 9/11, the Chinese government began to refer to Uighurs and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement as terrorists. As more ethnic Han have moved in, the Chinese have come to dominate media coverage and the confrontation

has grown. In 2009, 200 people were killed and 2,000 people were wounded in clashes between the two groups. In 2013, Muslim separatists killed several Chinese in the heart of Beijing. In recent years, many Uighurs have joined the IS. China sees the peril of this jihad and has responded with greater repression. This only fuels Uighur ethnic nationalism and extremist tactics.

Discussed further in Chapter 10, China's oppression of ethnic and religious minorities has resulted in numerous human rights abuses. What effects could ethnonational opposition have on China and its stature in the world?

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Chinese policy toward many other minorities is one of official recognition, granting limited autonomy with an extensive effort at central control. But repression is widespread and human rights violations are extensive, as discussed in Chapter 10. Although only 9 percent of China's population consists of ethnic minorities, those minorities are spread across resource-rich areas. They are actually the majorities in the strategically important border areas of not only Xinjiang but also Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan. The Chinese government's suppression of Tibet (in 1959 and 2008) and of Xinjiang demonstrate Beijing's determination to exert dominance and authority across the entire country.22 With increasing economic problems and growing economic inequities, the state may continue to be challenged by ethnic minorities.

Some ethnonational challenges lead to civil conflict and even war, as the case of Kashmir illustrates. Political scientist Jack Snyder has identified when ethnic nationalist challenges to the state based on the legitimacy of their language, culture, or religion are likely to lead to violence. When countervailing state institutions are weak, elites within these ethnonational movements may be able to incite the masses to war.23

Transnational Crime

Nowhere is the challenge to the state more evident than in the rise of transnational crime. Growing in value, extending in scope, and highly specialized, these activities have been

facilitated by numerous and fast transportation routes, rapid communication, and electronic financial networks. Transnational crime has led to the accelerating movement of illegal drugs, counterfeit goods, smuggled weapons, and laundered money, not to mention trade in body parts, piracy, and trafficking in poor and exploited people. Organized around flexible networks and circuitous trafficking routes and made easier by electronic transfers of funds, transnational crime has created new businesses while distorting national and regional economies. States' and governments' efforts to respond are often undermined by their rigid bureaucracies, laborious procedures, interbureaucratic fighting, and corrupt officials. In fact, some states—such as China, North Korea, and Nigeria—actively participate in these illicit activities or do nothing to stop them because key elites are making major profits.24

Other states such as Mexico have made concerted efforts to stop transnational crime. Beginning in 2006, Mexico sent in the military in an effort to break up its drug cartels. But violence has escalated. Since 2006, more than 200,000 people have become victims of homicide in Mexico. In one month alone, May 2017, 2,000 people were murdered. An estimated 34 to 55 percent of these homicides can be attributed to the drug cartels. Organized crime-style killings remain a major threat. The 2014 killings of 43 students at a teachers' college by a local gang led to outrage in the country. A panel convened by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights accused the government of hiding the presence of police and army in the area at the time. There are clearly questions about the government's possible complicity in cartel activity.

The Mexican case has transnational implications. Small arms smuggled into Mexico from the United States fuel the violence; gang violence crosses the border into American cities; American tourists stay away from Mexican resorts, with adverse effects on the economy; and support builds among Americans for constructing a wall between the United States and Mexico. Many states are finding it very difficult to control

and punish the transgressors, undermining their own sovereignty and that of their neighbors.

Fragile States

Fragile states have several characteristics: they have an inability to exercise a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their territory, to make collective decisions because of the erosion of legitimate authority, to interact with other states in the international system, and/or to provide public services. The notion of such a state entered the political lexicon in 1992 under the rubric of a failed state, with Somalia as the example. The Fund for Peace, in conjunction with Foreign Policy, publishes the Fragile States Index annually, based on 12 social, economic, and political indicators. In 2020, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Central African Republic were the most fragile states.25 Myanmar may well be added as the country's conflict with their military grows, its economy becomes paralyzed, and public services suffer. At least nine ethnic groups are competing for the loyalty of 135 ethnic groups. A civil war would cripple the already fragile state and have regional repercussions. Whatever the term used—fragile, failed, weak, dysfunctional—the implications are the same.

Fragile states pose an internal threat to the people residing within them. They fail to perform one of the state's vital functions—protection of its people from violence and crime. Political, civil, and economic rights of a fragile state's population are in continuous jeopardy. Such states are unable to serve their citizenry, one of the requisites of sovereignty.

As the most fragile state in 2020, as defined by the Fragile States Index, Yemen exemplifies these difficulties. The country is mired in civil war, droughts have led to freshwater scarcity for much of the population, and high unemployment rates and deepening food insecurity plague the people. According to the UN, over 20 million people need help securing food in Yemen and about 80 percent of the population needs humanitarian assistance. The country is also afflicted by major health crises. Through 2020, almost 4,000 people have died from cholera alone since an epidemic broke out in Yemen

in 2016, and almost 30 percent of people in the country with COVID-19 died, leaving Yemen with one of the highest COVID-19 case fatality rates in the world. The government is unable to provide basic services and security for the people, and over 3.65 million people have been displaced from their homes.

Fragile states also pose an international threat, serving as hideaways for transnational terrorists and pirates, as Somalia did when its functioning government ceased to exist in 1991. Similarly, in Yemen today, IS and Al Qaeda affiliates are exploiting the instability of the country to take violent actions. Because of their weakened or nonfunctioning infrastructure, fragile states can also become a breeding ground for diseases, as illustrated by the spread of cholera in Yemen beginning in 2016 caused by decontaminated water systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has also taken its toll at the same time that the country has faced widespread famine. These dual threats have led the United Nations to label Yemen as a humanitarian emergency, with as many as five million people affected.

As happened with cholera in Zimbabwe in 2008, these diseases can quickly spread by the sick crossing borders, threatening the security of neighboring states. Fragile states, with their weakened security infrastructure, can also serve as havens for transnational criminals, affecting the security of other states in significant ways. Democratic Republic of Congo provides an illustrative case, serving as a center for drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and human trafficking.

Check Your Understanding

Groups of people from different states who share religious, ideological, or policy beliefs and who work together to change the status quo are known as ethnonationalists.

cultural relativists.

pluralists.

transnational movements.

Which of the following statements about ethnonationalist movements is correct? Ethnonationalist movements often

resort to violence but have not yet brought about war.

Ethnonationalist movements all have the same goal: to form their own state.

Even the strongest states can face challenges from ethnonationalist movements.

The conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan is not due to ethnonationalist sentiments.

Glossary

transnational movements

groups of people from different states who share religious, ideological, or policy beliefs and who work together to change the status quo

extremist Islamic fundamentalism

groups seeking to change states and societies through violent and coercive means to support imposition of Sharia law

ethnonational movements

the participation in organized political activity of self-conscious communities sharing an ethnic affiliation; some movements seek autonomy within an organized state; others desire separation and the formation of a new state; still others want to join with a different state

fragile state

state which has ineffective or nonexistent government, widespread lawlessness, often accompanied by insurgency and crime; situation where state authorities are not protecting their own people

Endnotes

Note 19: See Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011). Return to reference 19

Note 20: Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (New York: Simon & Schuster,

1996). Return to reference 20

Note 21: Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won’t Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat,” Foreign Affairs 94:2 (March/April 2015): 87–98. Return to reference 21

Note 22: For a riveting account of Chinese government interactions with ordinary Tibetans, see Barbara Demick, Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town (New York: Random House, 2020). Return to reference 22

Note 23: Jack Snyder, From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000). Return to reference 23

Note 24: See Moisés Naím, Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy (New York: Doubleday, 2005). Return to reference 24

Note 25: Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index Annual Report 2020, May 8, 2020, https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/fsi2020-report.pdf (accessed 8/1/20). Return to reference 25

IN SUM: THE CENTRALITY OF STATES

States are facing important challenges in the world today. Still, states remain central actors in the international system. States go to war; states choose to cooperate or not cooperate with one another; states become parties to the treaties that make up international law; states set economic policies; states form international organizations. Understanding how states interact in these different ways is therefore central to the study of international relations. The chapters that follow deal with each of these issues, in turn. In Chapter 6, we turn first to one of the most important issues in the study of international relations—war. Chapter 7 then addresses the question of cooperation and international law, Chapter 8 deals with states’ economic relations, and Chapter 9 addresses the issue of international organizations.

Discussion Questions

You are the leader of an emerging economy such as Indonesia. What tools of statecraft do you have at your disposal to influence your neighbors? What if, instead, you are the leader of a rising power like the People's Republic of China? What tools could you use?

Each of the three main IR perspectives—realism, liberalism, and constructivism—has its own view of the state. Which of these do you think best captures the actions of major powers such as the United States? Does this same perspective best capture the actions of rising powers like India? What about developing states such as Ghana? Or fragile states such as Yemen?

Ethnonationalist movements are a major source of state instability. Compare two recent cases of such conflict. How are the states involved addressing the issue? Are they addressing it at all?

Choose one state labeled as a fragile state. What recommendations can you make to turn the state into a viable one?

Key Terms

bureaucratic politics model (p. 164) compellence (p. 157)

credibility (p. 149)

deterrence (p. 157)

diplomacy (p. 149)

engagement (p. 152)

ethnonational movements (p. 169) extremist Islamic fundamentalism (p. 167) fragile states (p. 173) hard power (p. 147)

organizational process model (p. 162) pluralist model (p. 164) power (p. 143)

power potential (p. 143) public diplomacy (p. 150) sanctions (p. 152)

satisficing (p. 164)

smart power (p. 148)

smart sanctions (p. 154) soft power (p. 147)

state (p. 143)

statecraft (p. 149)

Track One diplomacy (p. 151) Track Two diplomacy (p. 151) transnational movements (p. 166)

Glossary

bureaucratic politics model

the model of foreign policy decision making that posits that national decisions are the outcomes of bargaining among bureaucratic groups having competing interests; decisions reflect the relative strength of the individual bureaucratic players or of the organizations they represent

compellence

the use of threats to coerce another into taking an action it otherwise would not take

credibility

the quality of having both the ability and incentive to act using a certain policy such that other states believe it will be carried out

deterrence

the policy of maintaining a large military force and arsenal to discourage any potential aggressor from taking action

diplomacy

the practice of states trying to influence the behavior of other states by bargaining, negotiating, taking specific noncoercive actions or refraining from such actions, or appealing to the foreign public for support of a position

engagement

getting a target state to act in a desired way by rewarding the moves it makes in the desired direction; often referred to as positive sanctions

ethnonational movements

the participation in organized political activity of self-conscious communities sharing an ethnic affiliation; some movements seek autonomy within an organized state; others desire separation and the formation of a new state; still others want to join with a different state

extremist Islamic fundamentalism

groups seeking to change states and societies through violent and coercive means to support imposition of Sharia law

fragile state

state which has ineffective or nonexistent government, widespread lawlessness, often accompanied by insurgency and crime; situation where state authorities are not protecting their own people

hard power

states using various sources of power (economic or military) to coerce other states into adopting actions in its interests

organizational process model

the foreign policy decision-making model that posits that national decisions are the products of subnational governmental organizations and units which follow the standard operating procedures and processes of the organizations

pluralist model

a model of foreign policy making that focuses on the role that societal groups play in influencing national decisions

power

the ability not only to influence others but also to control outcomes so as to produce results that would not have occurred naturally

power potential

a measure of the power an entity like a state could have, derived from a consideration of both its tangible and its intangible resources; states may not always be able to transfer their power potential into actual power

public diplomacy

use of certain diplomatic methods to create a favorable image of the state or its people in the eyes of other states and their publics; methods include, for example, goodwill tours, cultural and student exchanges, and media presentations

sanctions

economic, diplomatic, and even coercive military force used to enforce an international policy or another state's policy; sanctions can be positive (offering an incentive to a state) or negative (punishing a state)

satisficing

in decision-making theory, the tendency of states and their leaders to settle for the minimally acceptable solution, not the best possible outcome, in order to reach a consensus and formulate a policy

smart power

using a combination of the hard power of coercion with the soft power of persuasion and attraction

smart sanctions

limited sanctions targeted to hurt or support specific groups; used to avoid the humanitarian costs of general sanctions

soft power

the power to attract states to change their behavior rather than having to coerce them into doing so; power is based on the legitimacy of the state's values or its policies

state

an organized political unit that has a geographic territory, a stable population, and a government to which the population owes allegiance and that is legally recognized by other states

statecraft

techniques states use to exert influence and project power including diplomacy, economic, and use of force tools

Track One diplomacy

negotiations among government officials taken on behalf of governments

Track Two diplomacy

unofficial overtures by private individuals or groups from outside governments to try and resolve an ongoing international crisis or civil war

transnational movements

groups of people from different states who share religious, ideological, or policy beliefs and who work together to change the status quo

6

War and Security

*

The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has challenged the security of both states for many years. Here, soldiers hang an Azeri flag in Nagorno-Karabakh, a contested region of Azerbaijan, after expelling many ethnic Armenians during a military conflict in 2020. How does the encroachment of Azeri forces and the displacement of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh affect the security of either state?

In September 2020, war broke out between the military forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan, continuing a decades-long conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh—a territory within Azerbaijan but populated and controlled largely by ethnic Armenians. Azerbaijan triumphed and gained some territory in the region in a peace deal brokered by Russia. However, hundreds were killed and thousands were displaced by the violence. This conflict is consistent with our conception of what war is and what poses a threat to national security. But war is not the only national security threat in the world today. In March 2019, a white supremacist carried out two mass shootings at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Fifty-one people were killed and forty-nine were injured. The attacks made headlines across the world, and the perpetrator became New Zealand's first convicted terrorist. In June 2017, a cyberattack hit Ukraine and spread across the globe within hours. Infrastructures and

companies around the world were affected, including in the United States, France, Britain, Russia, and Australia. These attacks illustrate new threats to national security.

Our conception of what poses a threat to national security has clearly expanded beyond just the threat of war. The range of actions states need to take to protect themselves has necessarily expanded as well. Historically, the measures states need to take to protect their national security have been clear. States build up their military forces in an effort to deter attacks from other states. And if attacked, they can use their military to defend themselves. However, building up military forces cannot necessarily protect states from newer national security threats such as the 2019 terrorist attacks in New Zealand and the 2017 cyberattack that hit Ukraine. But if it is not simply a matter of building up their military, what measures should states take to prevent these types of attacks? In addition, if these types of attacks are carried out, what type of response is warranted? If the perpetrators are not necessarily another state but individuals who reside in another state, can a state simply go into another state to attack those individuals? And what does that mean for the national security of the state where the perpetrators reside?

The challenge of dealing with issues of national security is a central problem for state leaders today. To understand the choices they face, we must answer several questions. How has the nature of national security changed over time? What constitutes war and what does not? What are the appropriate types of responses to different types of threats to national security? How might war and other threats to national security be prevented? This chapter seeks to provide answers to these fundamental questions.

*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Define war and identify the different categories of war.

Explain how the theoretical perspectives help us explain the causes of wars.

Describe the key characteristics of conventional and unconventional warfare.

Highlight the circumstances under which a war can be considered “just.”

Explain how realists, liberals, and constructivists differ in their approaches to managing state security.

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One of the central concerns of all foreign policy makers as well as scholars studying international relations is that of state (or “national”) security. We can think of national security as the ability of a state to protect its interests, secrets, and citizens from threats—both external and internal. This definition has three components. The first is a focus on threat: the fact that there is some actor, object, or potential action that can endanger a nation’s interests, secrets, or citizens. This threat could stem from outside or inside the state. The second is a focus on protection: the need of the nation to ensure the safety of the state’s interests, secrets, and citizens from harm by those threats. The third is a focus on capability: the actual ability of the state to provide that protection.

In the past, national security focused on a state’s ability to stave off military threats. Today, the definition of national security covers a variety of factors, including economic and environmental threats as well as nonphysical threats arising in cyberspace. National security has even expanded to include the idea that threats to individuals themselves endanger the security of the state—that “human security” is an important component of national security. This chapter focuses on two central types of security: military security and cybersecurity. Chapter 12 discusses several issues of human security.

Glossary

national security

the ability of a state to protect its interests, secrets, and citizens from threats (both external and internal) that endanger them

MILITARY SECURITY AND WAR

Wars—in particular, major wars between states—have been the focus of historians of international relations for centuries. Major works on war include Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE) and Carl von Clausewitz's On War (1832). World War I and its aftermath (the founding of the League of Nations) led American diplomatic historians and legal scholars to create a new discipline called international relations. Since that time, prominent scholars in this field have addressed many of the critical and vexing issues surrounding war: its causes, its conduct, its consequences, its prevention, and even the possibility of its elimination. This attention to war and security is clearly warranted. Of all human values, physical security—security from violence, starvation, and the elements—comes first. All other human values that are crucially important to the quality of our lives—good government, economic development, a healthy environment—presuppose a minimal level of physical security.

History suggests that a minimum level of physical security has not always been attainable. In the past 3,400 years, the world has been entirely at peace for only 268 of them. Estimates of deaths from war throughout human history range from 150 million to 1 billion people (depending on how war is defined). Over 108 million people were killed in the twentieth century alone.1

Following the world wars and the Korean War (1950–53), both the frequency and intensity of interstate war began a slow decline. This trend, however, is not the same for internal conflicts. The number of countries experiencing deaths from internal conflict has also risen over the past decade, from 26 countries in 2007 to 34 countries in 2019 (82 percent of which had countries outside the conflict become involved). Overall, the Global Peace Index—which ranks countries according to their level of peacefulness using a variety of indicators—shows that by 2020 the global level of peace had deteriorated by 2.5 percent since 2008.2 War therefore remains perhaps the most compelling issue in world politics, and international relations theorists continue to analyze why it occurs.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States retaliated by invading Afghanistan, resulting in a war

between the two nations that has lasted over 20 years. What factors cause states to enter into war and remain at war?

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Check Your Understanding

Which of the following best describes war after World War II?
an increase in interstate war

a decrease in interstate war

a decrease in internal conflict

There has been no change in interstate war or internal conflict.

Endnotes

Note 01: Chris Hedges, What Every Person Should Know about War (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 1. Return to reference 1

Note 02: Data come from the Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Peace Index 2020," http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/ (accessed 7/13/20). Return to reference 2

WHAT IS WAR?

International relations scholars debate how to define war. Over time, however, three common features have emerged. First, a war involves organized, deliberate violence by an identifiable political authority. Riots are often lethal, but they are not considered "war" because, by definition, a riot is neither deliberate nor organized. Second, wars are relatively more lethal than other forms of organized violence. Pogroms, bombings, and massacres are deliberate and organized but generally not sufficiently lethal to count as war. Currently, most international relations scholars accept that at least 1,000 deaths in a calendar year are needed in order for an event to count as a war. Third, and finally, for an event to count as a war, both sides must have some real capacity to harm each other, although that capacity need not be equal on both sides. We do not count genocides, massacres, and pogroms as wars because in a genocide, for example, only one side has any real capacity to kill, while the other side is effectively defenseless.

In sum, war is an organized and deliberate political act by an established political authority that causes 1,000 or more deaths in a 12-month period and involves at least two actors capable of harming each other.

Defining war is not simply academic. These definitions have real-world consequences. An important case in point was the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which over 750,000 men, women, and children were murdered in just four months. Had the international community named this violence properly as a genocide, the pressure to intervene militarily to halt it might have been greater, since in a genocide the side being murdered would have no chance of winning. However, the violence was instead characterized as the renewal of civil war, raising the question of whether international intervention should occur in Rwanda's internal affairs.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is a necessary characteristic for a conflict to be considered a war? the violence is random

there are at least 1,000 deaths in a calendar year

a clear victor emerges

the conflict must involve more than one state

Glossary

war

an organized and deliberate political act by an established political authority that causes 1,000 or more deaths in a 12-month period and involves at least two actors capable of harming each other

TYPES OF WAR

International relations scholars have developed many ways to categorize wars. At the broadest level, we distinguish between wars that take place between sovereign states (interstate war) and wars that take place within states (intrastate war). Scholars also distinguish between conventional and unconventional warfare, terrorism, and cyberwarfare.

Interstate War

Since the advent of the state system in the years following the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the state as a form of political association has proven ideal at organizing and directing the resources necessary for waging war. As Charles Tilly famously put it, "War made the state and the state made war."3 As a result, wars between states, also known as interstate wars, have captured the bulk of attention from international relations theorists and scholars.

Theorists are interested in interstate wars for two reasons. First, by definition, states have recognizable leaders and locations. When we say "France," we understand we are speaking about a government that controls a specific territory that others recognize as France. Therefore, states make good subjects for analysis and comparison. Second, states have formal militaries—some tiny and not much more than police forces, others vast and capable of projecting force across the surface of the globe and even into outer space. These militaries, and the state's capacity to marshal resources in support of them, make states formidable adversaries. Thus, interstate wars are often characterized by relatively rapid loss of life and destruction of property.

World War I and World War II are two of the most prominent examples of interstate war and illustrate how devastating it can be. Industrialization, which had occurred leading up to the beginning of World War I, revolutionized the killing power of states. The Industrial Revolution had led workers to move from rural areas to cities, making cities distinct targets to attack and allowing a state to inflict significant damage on the enemy all at once. The scope of the battlefield, once restricted to physical areas over which soldiers fought, expanded soon after World War I to include armaments and munitions workers, and eventually, even agricultural workers. The scope of the wars was astonishing. Weapons of mass destruction such as chemical weapons and nuclear weapons were employed, and the overall casualties were horrific: most belligerents lost 4 to 5 percent of their population in World War I, and double that in World War II.

More recently, however, wars have tended to be more limited in scope. One important set of examples of more limited

interstate war is the Arab-Israeli disputes, described in Chapters 2 and 5. Israel has fought six interstate wars against its neighbors—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon—and struggled against repeated Palestinian uprisings in the West Bank and Gaza. Since the conclusion of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, however, none of the opposing states have sought the complete destruction of their foes, and the conflict has blown hot and cold. With the increased destructiveness of modern warfare, adopting more limited actions has become states' most common option when contemplating violence against other states.

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IN FOCUS

Characteristics of War

Is an organized and deliberate political act

Causes 1,000 or more deaths in a 12-month period

Can be interstate or intrastate

Can be asymmetric (between parties of unequal power) like terrorism

Can be an act taken by established political authority

Involves at least two actors capable of harming each other

Can be conventional or unconventional

Can take place in cyberspace when an act is endorsed or carried out by a state government

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Intrastate War

Intrastate wars (civil wars) are wars that take place within a state. Examples of intrastate wars include a faction and a government fighting over control of territory (Democratic Republic of Congo) or rival groups fighting to establish a government to control a failed or fragile state (Somalia or Liberia); ethnonationalist movements fighting for greater autonomy or secession (Chechens in Russia, Kachins in Myanmar); and ethnic, clan, or religious groups fighting for

control of the state (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, Burundi, Yemen).

Civil wars tend to share several characteristics. They often last a long time, even decades, with periods of fighting punctuated by periods of relative calm. Whereas the goals may seem relatively limited in comparison to those of interstate wars, in the context of the rivalry between incumbent governments and rebels, the stakes are often very high—including secession, group autonomy, and control of the state. The human costs are therefore often substantial. Both combatants and civilians are killed and maimed, food supplies are interrupted, diseases spread as health systems suffer, money is diverted from constructive economic development to purchasing armaments, and generations of people grow up knowing only war.

The African continent provides examples of these major intrastate wars. Ethiopia's war with two of its regions (Ogaden and Eritrea) lasted decades, as did the civil wars between the north and south in both Sudan and Chad. Liberia and Sierra Leone have also been sites of civil conflict in which various factions, guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, and mercenaries have fought for control.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) provides another example of a major civil war, and one that became so internationalized and so destructive that it is often called the "Great African War" or "African World War." In 1996, an internal rebellion broke out in the DRC against the longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Very quickly, both Uganda and Rwanda supported the rebellion. After Mobutu was ousted and replaced with a new leader, Laurent Kabila, a wider war erupted two years later. Powerful Congolese leaders and ethnic groups, supported by Rwanda and Uganda, opposed the new government. Angola and Zimbabwe supported Kabila's government, as did Chad and Sudan. A major conflict broke out, and rebel groups and the armies of the various countries involved fought intensely—not only for control of the government but also for control of the DRC's vast natural resources. The war formally ended in 2003, but the repercussions lasted long after. The war destroyed the DRC's infrastructure and millions were forced to flee their homes. It

is estimated that more than 5 million people died during the war and its aftermath. Despite the efforts of a large UN peacekeeping force, examined in Chapter 9, more people were killed in this war than in any other conflict since World War II.

The most prominent intrastate wars that have broken out in the twenty-first century are those following the Arab Spring of 2011, especially those in Libya (February–October 2011) and Syria (2011–present). Both qualify as wars because well over 1,000 battle deaths resulted from conflict between an incumbent government and rebels, and because each side had military capacity to harm the other (though government forces had the greater capacity). Both followed a similar course: government forces harshly repressed peaceful protests, which then led to an escalation of protests and international condemnation. That escalation led to a harsher government response, with protests becoming more widespread and more violent. After evidence of government murders, rapes, torture, and massacres, there were calls for international intervention. In Libya's case, both the government and its international supporters were caught by surprise, and limited military intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on behalf of Libyan rebels accelerated the collapse of the government.

In Syria, the government was better prepared to fight the rebel groups that emerged. As if the war was not complicated enough, the terrorist group the Islamic State (IS) began making territorial gains in eastern Syria. This prompted the United States and several Middle Eastern states to begin to attack the IS in Syria. In 2015, Russia began conducting air strikes throughout Syria—not only against the IS but also against the rebel groups, bringing it directly into the civil war on the side of the government. Beyond fighting the IS, the United States also became involved, but on the side of the rebel groups. In response to the Syrian government's chemical weapons attack against its own citizens in 2017, the United States fired missiles at a Syrian government airbase. This attack officially brought the United States into the civil war. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are also involved, with Iran supporting the Syrian government, Saudi Arabia supporting

the rebel groups, and Turkey providing weapons and safe havens to some rebel groups. Currently, the civil war in Syria, which has provoked a flood of refugees seeking safe haven in Europe and neighboring countries (see Chapter 12), ranks among the world's most complicated and deadly civil wars.

As the cases of the DRC and Syria demonstrate, civil wars can become internationalized, with outside actors getting involved in the conflict on one side or the other. States, groups, and individuals from outside the warring country become involved by funding particular groups, selling weapons to various factions, and giving diplomatic or military support to one group over another. Recent civil wars that have experienced outside intervention include those in Mali (intervention by France and the Economic Community of West African States), Somalia (intervention by the United States, Ethiopia, Kenya, and the African Union, among others), and Yemen (intervention by Iran on one side and by a multilateral coalition led by Saudi Arabia on the other).

Conventional and Unconventional Wars

Throughout most of human history, wars were fought by people who were chosen, trained, and authorized as the military representing their community to attack or defend against their military counterparts in other political communities. In conventional wars, the tactics are characterized by regular armies openly engaged in combat. The tactical objective is to win control of a state by defeating the enemy's military forces on a territorial battlefield. Pure conventional warfare also employs the use of conventional weapons—weapons that are not weapons of mass destruction (such as chemical weapons, biological weapons, and nuclear weapons)—and combat actions are restricted to conventional targets (i.e., military targets). Unconventional wars are characterized by the flouting of restrictions to focus on military targets alone, the use of weapons of mass destruction, or the use of very different types of tactics—often guerrilla tactics, which are discussed below.

Most aspects of most wars reflect conventional warfare. The targets in war are typically military targets, not civilians; the

weapons used are conventional weapons such as guns and other small arms, tanks, combat helicopters, military aircraft and warships, land mines, and cluster munitions.

World War I and World War II, while fought for the most part conventionally, had some unconventional aspects in terms of weapons and targets. World War I saw the first large-scale use of chemical weapons on the battlefield. In 1915, German forces unleashed 168 tons of chlorine gas against French forces near the Belgian town of Ypres. French troops suffered 6,000 casualties in just a few minutes as prevailing winds carried the poisonous gas into the trenches. However, many German troops were also wounded or killed in handling the gas or by moving through areas still affected, and they were therefore unable to exploit the temporary advantages gained. In addition, the effects of the weapons proved difficult to restrict to combat. Chemicals leached into the soil and water table, affecting agriculture for months afterward. After the war, winners and losers signed a Geneva Protocol outlawing the use of chemical weapons in war.

World War II saw the advent of strategic bombing, which led to the possibility of large-scale harm to noncombatants and to a reexamination of who a "noncombatant" actually was. Prior to the war, there was general agreement that civilians were to be protected from intentional harm. But the belligerents possessed large fleets of ships, armored vehicles, and planes, all of which required civilians to build and maintain them. Were those civilians to be protected, too? As the war intensified, the dividing line between those who were to be protected from deliberate harm and those who could be legitimately targeted broke down. By the war's end, both sides had taken to using massive air strikes to deliberately target civilians. In March 1945, bombers from the U.S. Eighth Air Force targeted Japan's capital, Tokyo, with incendiary bombs. The ensuing flames killed over 100,000 Japanese, mostly civilians, in a single raid. World War II also saw the development of a nuclear weapon—a weapon that clearly could not be limited to combatants, as the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 demonstrated. Over 200,000 people died from the attacks.

While they have been around for centuries, the tactics of unconventional warfare have come to the fore in the past half century. In guerrilla warfare (the term comes from a Spanish word meaning “small war”), guerrilla groups hide among civilians and use strategies including hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, sabotages, and raids to attack their stronger military opponents. Guerrilla warfare therefore effectively reverses the conventional relationship between soldiers and civilians. In conventional war, soldiers risk their lives to protect civilians. In guerrilla warfare, civilians risk their lives to protect the guerrillas, who hide among them and who cannot easily be distinguished from ordinary civilians when not actually fighting. Unconventional, guerrilla tactics are therefore designed to win control of the state, not by defeating enemy forces outright on the battlefield, as in the case of conventional warfare, but by first winning control over the civilian population. “For without the disciplined support of the civil population, militarily inferior guerrilla forces can have no hope of success.”4

Guerrilla warfare is a strategy often used by the weaker party when fighting in an asymmetric conflict—a conflict characterized by an inequality in material strength between the two sides, with one side significantly more well-equipped and technologically advanced than the other. Mao Zedong and his People’s Liberation Army, for example, used guerrilla warfare during the Chinese Civil War (1927–37, 1945–49) and in China’s resistance to Japanese occupation during World War II (1937–45). In doing so, they were able to survive many setbacks. Eventually, they defeated the well-armed and U.S.-supplied Nationalist armies of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), whose forces fled to the island of Formosa, now Taiwan. This unexpected outcome led to the spread of guerrilla warfare as a template for other insurgents, particularly in Asia.

Like any strategy, however, guerrilla warfare itself has weaknesses. In two conflicts following World War II, the stronger actors—Britain during the Malayan Emergency (1948–60) and the United States in the Philippines (1952–53)—devised a counterinsurgency strategy that effectively defeated revolutionary guerrillas. That strategy aimed not at

insurgent armed forces, or even their leaders, but instead at the real strength of successful guerrilla warfare: the people. In both Malaya and the Philippines, the governments, supported by Britain and the United States, respectively, sought to redress the grievances that had led many of the country's poor or disaffected either to actively support the guerrillas or to political apathy. The support for the guerrillas waned and the government was able to arise victorious.

Guerrilla warfare is only one of several strategies that could be used to overcome a more materially powerful opponent in an asymmetric conflict. Mohandas Gandhi's resistance to British rule over India in the 1940s is an example of what is referred to as nonviolent resistance. Like revolutionary guerrilla warfare, nonviolent resistance deliberately places ordinary people at grave risk of harm in the pursuit of political objectives. Unlike guerrilla warfare or terrorism, however, nonviolent resistance avoids the use of violence as a means of protest.

Terrorism

Another clear threat to national security, and another example of asymmetric conflict, is terrorism. Scholars disagree on a universal definition of terrorism, but most definitions share three key elements:

Terrorism is political in nature or intent.

Perpetrators of terrorism are nonstate actors.

Targets of terrorism are noncombatants, such as ordinary citizens, political figures, or bureaucrats.

While there are many groups that fit this academic definition, not all of them are labeled as terrorists by state governments. This is because officially labeling a group as a terrorist organization is a largely political act. As Anna Meier stated, "What matters is that concerns about offending allies, along with larger geopolitical considerations, often take precedence in deciding which organizations do or do not get listed."5 But regardless of the politics behind official labels, our understanding of what terrorism is remains the same.

Terrorism involves physical harm, but the essence of terrorism is psychological, not physical. Whatever the aims of the individual terrorist, killing is a by-product of terrorism as a strategy. The real aim of terrorism is to call attention to a cause, while at the same time calling into question the legitimacy of a target government by highlighting its inability to protect its citizens. For example, during the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, a group of Palestinian Arab terrorists styling themselves "Black September" took 11 Israeli athletes hostage in the Olympic Village. Two of the hostages were murdered immediately. During a botched rescue attempt by the surprised and ill-prepared Germans, the remaining nine hostages were murdered by their captors. Black September was a part of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a group founded by Yasser Arafat in 1964 to advance the cause of Palestinian Arab statehood by means of violence. But until Munich, few outside the Middle East had ever heard of the PLO. After the games, significant attention turned to the cause, and the PLO (and "terrorists" more broadly) became a widespread topic of conversation and state action.

Terrorism has often been called the strategy of the weak, but this argument begs the question of what "power" actually is. Is power only the material power to kill, or can it reside in the power of ideas? Gandhi, for example, did not overcome the British and win India's independence by means of violent revolution. The power of ideas proved decisive. Terrorists also hope to harness the power of ideas: they invariably justify their violence by using immortality imagery, whether nationalist, Marxist, ethnocentrist, or religious. In the Irish Republican Army's long struggles with British rule in Ireland, several of these immortality images were used as terrorists sought to coerce Britain into abandoning Ireland's Protestant minority. In each case, terrorists intend their violent acts to preserve the nation, the proletariat, a particular race, or the faithful, ensuring its immortality

Much recent terrorist activity has its roots in the Middle East —in the ongoing quest of Palestinian Arabs for self-determination, in the hostility various Islamic groups have

toward Western forces and ideas, and in the resurgence of extremist Islamic fundamentalism. Among terrorist groups with roots in the Middle East are Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestine Islamic Jihad. After the September 11, 2001, attack against the United States, Al Qaeda was the most publicized of these groups. A shadowy network of extremist Islamic fundamentalists from many countries, including some outside the Middle East, Al Qaeda is motivated by the desire to install strict Islamic regimes in the Middle East, support radical Islamic insurgencies in Southeast Asia, and punish the United States for its support of Israel. When the United States and its allies began to seriously hurt Al Qaeda—as they did from 2009 to 2012—its leadership adapted by dispersing and forming new affiliates, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq and Al Qaeda in Yemen. With the growth of the IS and, most recently, the revival of Taliban, Al Qaeda has regrouped, with various factions active.

The roots of the IS formed during the 1979 Shiite revolution in Iran and the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. That invasion gave Shiites power over the Arab Sunni minority, and the IS has taken up the radical Sunni cause. The IS uses social media to broadcast its terrorist acts including beheadings, mass executions, rape and sexual enslavement of women, and the destruction of cultural antiquities. The IS claims religious authority centered in the proclamation of a caliphate—an area under the leadership of an Islamic steward considered to be a religious successor to the Prophet Muhammad and the leader of the entire Muslim community. Many of the estimated 15,000 foreign recruits to the IS from as many as 80 countries are attracted by its utopian goals.

However, there are significant splits—not only between most Muslims from fundamentalist jihadist groups like the IS but also among those different jihadist groups themselves. They disagree over who should be targeted, what tactics should be used, and how the organization should be structured. This can be clearly seen in the Sahel region of Africa in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Somali. While all label themselves jihadists, some are steeped in Al Qaeda’s teachings; others are fighting their own corrupt governments; others are fighting over local

issues like farmland and water; still others just happen to be Muslim. These differences have led to competition and setbacks for many of these terrorist groups. Indeed, the IS suffered setbacks in the late 2010s, and in 2018 it was surpassed for the first time since 2014 in causing the greatest number of terrorism-related deaths. In 2018, the Taliban in Afghanistan, who had been regaining power since their ousting from rule in 2001 by a NATO invasion, rose to the deadliest terrorist group in the world. However, many of the jihadists in the Sahel also pose significant threats. Over 3,500 deaths have occurred since 2016. United Nations, French, and American troops are all deployed in the region (see Chapter 9).

Terrorism also has a long history outside the Middle East, reflecting diverse, often multiple, motivations. Table 6.1 identifies various types of these terrorist groups. Some groups adhere to extreme religious positions, such as the Irish Republican Army. Some other groups seek (or have sought) territorial separation or autonomy from a state. The Basque separatists in Spain, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and Chechen groups in Russia have all tried to achieve this goal. Still other groups—most often in the West—have far-right ethnonationalist positions, including neo-Nazi groups such as National Socialist Underground in Germany, Russian Imperial Movement in Russia (the first far-right movement designated as a terrorist organization by the United States), and National Action and Sonnenkrieg Division in the UK. These groups are often connected transnationally. For example, Sonnenkrieg Division, which was proscribed by the UK in 2020, is just one group in a network of white supremacist organizations that has branches in the United States, Canada, Germany, the UK, and other European countries. Incidents of far-right terrorism have been rising significantly in the West, with the total number of terrorist acts committed by these groups increasing by 320 percent over the past five years.6

Since the turn of the century, terrorism has taken a new turn. Terrorist acts have become more lethal, even as the groups responsible have become more dispersed. In 2000, around 3,300 deaths resulted from terrorist attacks worldwide, increasing to around 16,000 in 2018 (though that is

significantly lower than its peak in 2014, when around 33,000 people died from terrorist attacks).7 Increasingly, terrorists have made use of a diverse array of weapons, including AK-47s, sarin gas, shoulder-fired missiles, anthrax, backpack explosives, and truck bombs. Yet their actions can also be very simple to carry out, such as driving cars or trucks into crowds of people, as in the 2016 attacks in Nice, France, where at least 80 people were killed and many others injured. Terrorist groups have also made effective use of the Internet and social media as a recruitment tool, and many are increasingly using soft power (as discussed in Chapter 5) to win support not through coercion but through attraction. For example, the IS takes credit for the construction of new roads, schools, clinics, and water systems (many of which were financed by outside countries) to help win followers.

TABLE 6.1

Selected Terrorist Organizations

GROUP

LOCATION

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTACKS

Al Qaeda

Formerly in Afghanistan; now dispersed throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, and Yemen

Formed by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s among Arabs who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan; recently relies mostly on independent cells rather than formal hierarchically centralized structure; responsible for September 11, 2001, terrorist attack in the United States and bombings throughout Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Southern and Central Asia.

Boko Haram (Western Ways Are Forbidden)

Northern Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon

Salafi jihadists who violently pursue the establishment of a strict version of Sharia law; offshoot called Islamic State West Africa Province; responsible for the displacement of thousands

of individuals and armed assaults on civilians (school-age children) and military targets.

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)

Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip

Its leader signed bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling for attacks on U.S. interests; elected in 2006 as governing authority in Gaza.

Hezbollah (Party of God)

Lebanon

Also known as Islamic Jihad; often directed by Iran and suspected in the bombing of the U.S. embassy and marine barracks in Beirut in 1983; dominates Lebanon politically; fights against Israel.

The Islamic State

Formerly centered in Syria and northern Iraq, but actively franchising to Yemen, Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, and possibly Chechnya

An outgrowth of Al Qaeda in Iraq; responsible for thousands of murders, including beheadings, as well as rapes and sexual slavery; aims to establish an "Islamic" caliphate (no territorial boundaries); longtime leader and self-proclaimed caliph committed suicide in 2019, though a new leader has been chosen and factions continue to act.

Sonnenkrieg Division

United Kingdom

Extreme right-wing terrorist group; part of a loose transnational network of white supremacist groups with branches in the United States, Canada, the UK, Germany, and other European countries; proscribed by the UK in 2020.

Taliban

Afghanistan

Emerged in 1994 as reactionary group combining mujahideen that fought Soviet invasion in 1979 and Pashtun tribesmen; ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001; regrouped in Pakistan

and have been steadily regaining territory in Afghanistan; in 2018, overtook the IS as the world's deadliest terrorist group; vying for power in Afghanistan.

The international community has taken action against terrorists by creating a framework of international rules dealing with terrorism. The framework includes 19 counterterrorism instruments and UN Security Council resolutions that address such issues as punishing hijackers and those who protect them; protecting airports, diplomats, and nuclear materials in transport; and blocking the flow of financial resources to global terrorist networks. Individual states have also taken steps to increase state security (the United States' controversial USA Patriot Act is one example), to support counterintelligence activities, and to promote cooperation among national enforcement agencies in tracking and apprehending terrorists. States have sanctioned other states they view as supporting terrorists or as not taking effective enforcement measures against them. Libya, Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, and Iraq are prominent examples of sanctioned states. But it is important to recall that despite having shut down many terrorist financial networks and enhancing security in airports and ports, many developed states including the United States, Belgium, and France have had difficulty in taking effective enforcement measures against terrorists. After all, the terrorists who attacked New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, learned to fly commercial airplanes in Florida. And some of the terrorists responsible for the Paris bombings in 2015 were French citizens and individuals living in Belgium.

How do attacks such as the one in Nice, France, impact state security? Are there realistic measures states can take to prevent further attacks? Here, French citizens leave tokens to remember those lost in the terror attack.

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Cyberwarfare

In the past several decades, a new type of threat to national security has arisen—threats stemming from cyberspace. Cyberspace is more than just the Internet. As defined by

Ronald Deibert, cyberspace includes “the entire spectrum of networked information and communication systems and devices” and now pervades all aspects of society, economics, and politics.8 Given its central role in individual, national, and international relations, cyberspace is now considered to be a critical infrastructure by most state governments, transforming it into a central focus of national security. The goal is to protect the state from cyberwarfare. Cyberwarfare refers to state actions taken to penetrate another state’s computers or networks for the purpose of causing damage or disruption. Nonstate actors can also engage in such cyberattacks—either on their own or in conjunction with state governments. The threats stemming from such attacks are as widespread as cyberspace itself.

Cyberwarfare has become increasingly common in state relations. China is thought to operate one of the most extensive cyberattack operations in the world against both government and corporate targets. One of the first major cyberwarfare attacks—a series of coordinated attacks (labeled Titan Rain by the U.S. government) that began in 2003 and persisted for at least three years—was a Chinese operation. Russia is also a significant perpetrator of cyberattacks. During the war over the territory of South Ossetia between Russia and Georgia, the Georgian government ministries were subject to a major denial-of-service attack (in which machines and network resources were rendered unavailable due to a disruption of servers connected to the Internet). In June 2017, a major cyberattack hit Ukraine and quickly spread worldwide, as introduced in the opening vignette. The attack was designed to hit the day before a holiday celebrating the adoption of Ukraine’s first constitution after achieving independence from the Soviet Union. While some Russian industries were affected, Ukraine argued that Russia was behind the attack.

One of the most prominent cyberwarfare attacks was an attack on Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities that is believed to have been organized by the United States and Israel. The attackers used multiple strategically exploitable vulnerabilities in software (zero-day exploits) and spent numerous months and millions of dollars on research and advance preparation.

Although the attack brought Iranian nuclear enrichment programs to only a limited halt, it is widely seen as the first act of sabotage undertaken in cyberspace and it significantly advanced the evolution of cyberwarfare. North Korean hackers have become particularly effective, launching an attack in 2014 against Sony Pictures, a 2017 ransomware attack on 150 countries, and claiming in 2020 to have successfully penetrated Israeli defense systems.

Because of the growing frequency and impact of cyberattacks, cybersecurity has become a central feature of states' strategic actions to protect themselves at the international level. The United States has placed cyberspace as equal in importance to land, air, sea, and space in its strategic doctrine and has established a special U.S. military command dedicated solely to cyberspace. China announced the creation of its own military unit dedicated to the investigation and prevention of cyberattacks on its own computer systems in 2010. Many states have taken similar steps.

While most actions in the realm of cybersecurity have been unilateral actions taken by individual states, some cooperative agreements have been forged. For example, the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have both taken actions pushing states to pass laws criminalizing certain behaviors in cyberspace and providing police with the authority to enforce these laws. Several bilateral agreements have also been created to increase communication and cooperation for investigating and preventing cybercrimes.

Cooperation at the global level, however, has been limited. In 2004, the UN General Assembly called for the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on information and communications technology (ICT). Its purpose was to study existing and potential threats to states' information security and to develop possible cooperative measures to address them. Successful GGE meetings produced reports that were accepted by the UN General Assembly, showing widespread agreement on several issues including that in their use of ICTs, states must observe the principles of international law, state sovereignty, the settlement of disputes by peaceful

means, and nonintervention in the internal affairs of other states. While the GGE has produced several successful reports throughout its history, in 2017 it failed to produce a report receiving consensus support. This failure has opened up questions about the future of the GGE and interstate cooperation in cybersecurity.

Nevertheless, almost all aspects of cybersecurity have a transnational component, as actions taken in cyberspace affect people across the world. One response to this reality has been the creation of groups of nonstate experts designed to manage computer security incidents. These groups, known as computer emergency response teams (CERTs), are located all around the world. In 1990, these nationally based teams began to coordinate in the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST). The goals of FIRST are to promote information sharing among its members, assist in rapid reaction to incidents, and foster cooperation and coordination to help prevent incidents in the first place. By mid-2020, FIRST had 500 members, spread over Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

There are many different types of war, and all can be devastating to a state's security. Given that war is so important, we should try to understand the causes of war and examine possible ways to prevent it. The three main perspectives of international relations provide some insights.

Check Your Understanding

A war that takes place within a state is known as an interstate war.

intrastate war.

asymmetric war.

unconventional war.

Which of the following statements are part of most scholarly definitions of terrorism? It must be political in intent.

It must be motivated by religion.

It must be carried out by nonstate actors.

Targets must be noncombatants.

Glossary

interstate wars

wars between states

intrastate wars

wars that take place within a state (also known as civil wars)

conventional wars

regular armies openly engaged in combat with the objective to win control of the state by defeating the enemy's military force on the battlefield

unconventional wars

wars distinguished by willingness to flout restrictions on legitimate targets of violence or refuse to accept the traditional outcomes of battles as an indicator of victory or defeat

guerrilla warfare

the use of irregular armed forces to undermine the will of an incumbent government (or its foreign support) by selectively attacking the government's vulnerable points or personnel over a prolonged period of time; often used by weaker power

asymmetric conflict

conflict between a more powerful party and significantly weaker party

nonviolent resistance

resistance to established authority that systematically precludes the use of violence as a tactic; common examples include strikes, sit-ins, and protest marches

terrorism

an act that is political in nature or intent committed by nonstate actors that targets noncombatants (a form of asymmetric conflict)

cyberspace

the entire spectrum of networked information and communication systems and devices

cyberwarfare

state actions taken to penetrate another state's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption

Endnotes

Note 03: Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in The Making of National States in Western Europe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 42 Return to reference 3

Note 04: Franklin A. Lindsay, "Unconventional Warfare," Foreign Affairs 40:2 (January 1962): 264–74. Return to reference 4

Note 05: Anna Meier, "What Does a 'Terrorist' Designation Mean?" Lawfare, July 19, 2020, www.lawfareblog.com/what-does-terrorist-designation-mean (accessed 7/27/20). Return to reference 5

Note 06: Institute for Economics & Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism," November 2019, www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2019-web.pdf (accessed 7/13/20). Return to reference 6

Note 07: Institute for Economics & Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2019." Return to reference 7

Note 08: Ronald Deibert, "CyberSecurity," in Routledge Handbook of Security Studies, 2nd ed., ed. Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Thierry Balzacq (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 172. Return to reference 8

THE CAUSES OF WAR

In an analysis of any war, we will find more than one cause for the outbreak of violence. This multiplicity of explanations can seem overwhelming. How can we study the causes of war systematically, when the causes often seem idiosyncratic? Theories of international relations highlight different factors that might help explain why wars occur.

Realist Interpretations of the Causes of War

If one key issue distinguishes realists from their critics, it is that for realists, war is a natural, inevitable feature of interstate politics. As discussed in Chapter 3, realists see the problem of war as stemming from the fact that the international system is anarchic—in the international system there exists no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws, resolve disputes, or enforce law and order. War therefore breaks out because no authority exists to prevent it. As long as there is anarchy, there will be war. War, in such a system, might even appear to be the best course of action a state can take. War and conquest can help a state acquire resources that it can use to increase its power. Moreover, for offensive realists, war is a way to enhance a state's reputation by demonstrating its willingness to engage in conflict. Doing so can help a state get other states to join with it (bandwagon) in an effort to prevent themselves from being attacked as well.

The anarchic international system also has no legitimized authority to help peacefully resolve contending claims that states may have. John Mearsheimer calls this the "911 problem"—there is no hotline, or "central authority, to which a threatened state can turn for help."9 One of the most common contending claims over which violence breaks out between states involves contested territory. For almost all of the previous century, the Arab-Israeli dispute rested on competing territorial claims to Palestine; in the Andes, Ecuador and Peru have competing territorial claims; and in the South China Sea, Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam are all struggling over conflicting claims to offshore islands. Ukraine and Russia both view Crimea as part of their own territory, and as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a war in 2020 (in addition to many other conflicts) over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. For realists, without an arbiter to resolve these disputes, a state might resort to violence to win the territory it claims as its own. Indeed, violence regularly takes place over claims to Palestine and has broken out on several occasions regarding the conflicting territorial claims over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Another set of disputes for which there is no effective arbiter is the competing claims to self-determination made by groups within states. Tibetans, Chechens, Catalonians, Kurds, and Quebecois have all expressed a desire for their own state. Who decides whether their claims for self-determination are legitimate? Without an internationally legitimized arbiter, authority rests with the states themselves. The groups seeking self-determination thus often resort to force against the state. For example, the struggle between Chechnya and Russia over Chechen independence frequently involves armed conflict. In 1999, Russia invaded Chechnya after it had declared independence and succeeded in returning it to Russian control. Violence has continued to break out regularly ever since.

The Kurdish people in Iraq show their regional pride while voting in a nonbinding independence referendum in September 2017. The vote for independence angered neighbors in the region who fear similar uprisings in their own nations.

*

In addition to affirming the importance of anarchy for understanding why we see war, some realists attribute war to other facets of the international system, such as the distribution of power. For example, Kenneth Organski advances a realist argument referred to as “power transition theory.” This theory posits that it is not only mismatched material power that tempts states to war, but also the anticipation of shifts in the relative balance of power. War occurs because states believe that more power leads to expectations of more influence, wealth, and security. A power transition can therefore cause war in one of two patterns. In the first pattern, a rising power might launch a war to solidify its position. For example, ten to twenty years before the beginning of World War II, Germany’s power relative to that of France and the United Kingdom was extremely small, as Germany had just been defeated in World War I. Germany’s power rose significantly over those decades and had almost reached parity with that of France and the United Kingdom by the start of the war. The prediction of power transition theory that Germany would act militarily to help secure its new position in the international system played out in this case, and

World War II broke out.10 In the second pattern, the currently most powerful state(s) might launch a preventive war to keep a rising challenger down. For example, one of the United States' reasons for going to war against Iraq in 2003 was that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons and its nuclear program needed to be dismantled before it acquired the power and capability to use such weapons. Whichever pattern occurs, according to the theory, power transitions increase the likelihood of war.

Liberal Interpretations of the Causes of War

While realists focus significant attention in their analyses of war on characteristics of the international system, liberals tend to focus more on characteristics of the state and institutions (both domestic and international). State and societal explanations for war are among the oldest. Plato, for example, posited that war is less likely where the population is cohesive and enjoys a moderate level of prosperity. Since the population would be able to thwart an attack, an enemy is likely to refrain from launching such an attack. Many thinkers during the Enlightenment, including Immanuel Kant, believed that war was more likely in aristocratic states. Kant goes farther, arguing in his book Perpetual Peace (1795) that three factors help to foster peace—democracy, economic interdependence, and international institutions. These factors are central in liberal theories about why we do (or do not) see war.

In the liberal perspective, democratic peace theory holds that democracies rarely (if ever) go to war with other democracies. There are several reasons why this is the case.11 First, some theorists argue that democracies share norms of compromise and cooperation. At the domestic level, democracies offer citizens who have grievances a chance to deal with these complaints by nonviolent means. Projecting this norm to the international level, two democracies who share the norm of nonviolent resolution of conflicts are likely to pursue peaceful means to resolve their disputes.

Second, some theorists argue that institutional constraints exist in democracies that help to prevent them from going to war. There is more transparency in the decision-making process, providing leaders with trust that commitments made will be

upheld. If democratic leaders back down from their commitments, they can also face audience costs—costs that stem from negative public opinion about leaders' actions. Nondemocracies have more difficulty in building trust and decreasing uncertainty due to the nontransparent nature of their regimes. A lack of transparency, and a lack of audience costs at the domestic level, can therefore also explain why we see war when nondemocracies are involved.

So while there is a strong correlation between democracy and peace and strong supporting explanations, empirical evidence finds that partially democratic states tend to fight in wars most often. This is particularly worrisome to liberals as many states have backslid from democracy in recent years, as noted in Chapter 2.12

Another theory from the liberal perspective—commercial peace theory—focuses on interdependence between states. This theory posits that states that are more interdependent, particularly through trade and investment, are less likely to go to war. Peace maintains the prospect for continued economic benefits, something both states desire. War interrupts trade and blocks profits. Thus, states that are more interconnected by commercial institutions—and thus more dependent on one another for trade and other economic gains—are less likely to go to war with one another. A lack of interdependence and connections between states can therefore be a reason why we see states resort to violence to resolve disputes. There is significantly less cost to doing so than there is for states that are interdependent and share these connections.

Some liberal theories also highlight how international institutions might influence the outbreak of conflict. First, international institutions help build positive connections between states, and economic institutions, in particular, foster interdependence. In this way, institutions can therefore help promote peace. The lack of shared membership in such institutions might thus increase the possibility that conflict could break out between states. Second, states that are left out of institutions might feel threatened by the connections forged between states within those institutions, potentially adding to the possibility of conflict. For example, as discussed in

Chapter 3, the possibility that Ukraine might join NATO and sign an association agreement with the EU was seen by Russia as a threat to its interests, as membership in these institutions would bring Ukraine closer to the West. Theorists coming from a liberal perspective might argue that Russia's misgivings helped fuel the conflict that broke out between Russia and Ukraine in 2014.

Another theory, which does not fall directly in the liberal tradition but that shares many of its assumptions, focuses on the bargaining that underpins states' disputes to explain why we see war. This theory argues that in any dispute between states there is an underlying bargaining process.13 Each state has an ideal outcome to the dispute and some "reservation point"—the worst outcome they would be willing to accept. In most cases, because war is costly, the acceptable outcomes for both states overlap—i.e., a "zone of agreement" exists. They can negotiate a compromise solution that lies somewhere in that zone, and by doing so, they avoid incurring the costs of war. However, because states do not have complete information about what the other side is willing to accept, and because they have an incentive to bluff to get a better outcome, states might not be able to find a compromise that lies in the zone of agreement. If they cannot, war becomes likely, the result of a failure of the bargaining process.

Constructivist Interpretations of the Causes of War

Constructivists focus significant attention on the role of identities in international relations. Identities shape a state's interests, and thus influence its foreign policy goals and the tactics and strategies it uses to advance those goals. In this way, identities can influence whether a state is likely to be more aggressive or more restrained in how it pursues its foreign policy. For example, contrast the foreign policies of Switzerland and North Korea. Switzerland does not focus on military might or aggression. It identifies itself as a neutral actor in the international system, and its policy pursuits reflect this. Switzerland remained neutral in both world wars and has chosen not to join many international institutions—it did not even join the United Nations until 2002. In contrast, North Korea identifies itself in the post–Cold War period as the key

“anti-imperialist, socialist bulwark” standing in opposition to the United States.14 Its aggressive foreign policy, which centers on the defiance of international norms and development of nuclear weapons, is directly connected to this belligerent identity.15 These contrasting identities make the likelihood that these states would become involved in a war quite different.

There is also a relational aspect to identities. The way one state views another state is shaped in important ways by the interactions that they have had. These interactions create perceptions of similarities and differences between states. Rather than pure military power, these perceptions and the identities they create influence the potential for war between different states. One state could be seen as an ally and not a threat, even if it is a militarily powerful state. Another state could be seen as an adversary even if it has fewer capabilities. For example, Canada might fear that North Korea is more of a threat than the United States, even though the United States has greater relative power than North Korea, possesses nuclear weapons, and actually shares a border with Canada, which would make an invasion relatively simple. The difference in identities is what makes one state seem more threatening than another. So where do these identities come from?

Ideas are an important component in the construction of identities. The idea of the right to self-determination—the right of a people to determine its own future political status—contributes to the formation of common and conflicting identities and the outbreak of war. This is most clearly evident in the wars to end colonial rule in the mid-twentieth century. Examples include the 1945–50 Indonesian struggle for independence from the Netherlands and the 1945–54 Vietnamese war against France. Conflicts over self-determination have continued long since decolonization. For example, South Sudan fought a civil conflict with Sudan for over two decades, gaining its independence in 2011. Some conflicts for self-determination even continue today, as is the case with Chechnya in Russia and Tigray Region in Ethiopia.

Nationalism—a sense of national consciousness placing primary emphasis on the culture and interests of one’s own

nation over those of other nations—provides another example of the role ideas and identities play in influencing war. The idea of nationalism has led to the creation of conflicting identities among nations throughout history, as it creates a sense of a nation (identity) that stands against the identities of "others" outside one's own nation. Conflicting identities driven by nationalist sentiments have contributed to many wars.

Nationalist ideas and identities can also be manipulated by elites to pursue their own individual goals through violence (i.e., war). Adolf Hitler used nationalism as a key motivating factor in Germany's actions in World War II. Slobodan Miloševi? used nationalism to create a sense of common identity among ethnic Serbians from the various republics of Yugoslavia, as well as a sense that their identity stood in contrast to the identities of other ethnicities. This nationalism fueled war and even, arguably, genocide. As one U.S. ambassador described Miloševi?'s manipulation of nationalist sentiments among Serbs, "He is very successful in manipulating Serbian nationalism to stay in power. If there was serious peace and prosperity, he would not survive very long."16 Overall, for constructivists, ideas and identities can play a central role in instigating conflict.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Causes of War

Theoretical Perspective

Highlighted Causes of War

Realism

Anarchy of the international system

Distribution of power in the system

Power transitions

Liberalism

Lack of democratic institutions/values

Lack of interdependence

Lack of shared institutions

Constructivism

Aggressive state identities

Divergent identities

Possession of belligerent ideas

Check Your Understanding

What do constructivists believe? Power and differentials and changes between states lead to war.

The ways states view each other is shaped by their past interactions.

Economic interdependence is a key factor in explaining peace.

State identities are fixed and do not change over time.

Glossary

democratic peace theory

theory supported by empirical evidence that democratic states do not fight wars against each other, but do fight wars against authoritarian states

commercial peace theory

a theory that states that are interdependent through trade and investment are less likely to go to war; conflict is too economically costly

Endnotes

Note 09: John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 32. Return to reference 9

Note 10: A. F. K. Organski, World Politics (New York: Knopf, 1958), chap. 12; and A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, The War Ledger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Return to reference 10

Note 11: There is extensive literature on this question. See William J. Dixon, “Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict,” American Political Science Review 88

(1994): 14–32; and Erik Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace,” American Journal of Political Science 51:1 (2007): 166–91. Return to reference 11

Note 12: “No Man’s Land,” The Economist, November 10, 2018, 85. Return to reference 12

Note 13: The model of international bargaining is elaborated in James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” International Organization 49:3 (Summer 1995): 379–414. Return to reference 13

Note 14: San Pil Chun, [Understanding S?n’gun policy] (Pyongyang Press: Pyongyang, 2004), p. 15. Return to reference 14

Note 15: Jacques E. C. Hymans, “Assessing North Korean Nuclear Intentions and Capacities: A New Approach,” Journal of East Asian Studies 8:2 (2008): 259–82. Return to reference 15

Note 16: Quoted in Michael Dobbs, “Serbian Nationalism Lifts Milosevic,” Washington Post, March 30, 1999. Return to reference 16

PREVENTING WAR AND MANAGING STATE SECURITY

With an understanding of the causes of war, we can begin to discuss how to prevent war. The different international relations perspectives offer different analyses of how war might be prevented.

Realist Approaches to Preventing War

Realist approaches to managing security stem from the fact that for realists, war is an inevitable condition of interstate politics: it can be managed but never eradicated. Classical realists, ranging from Thucydides to Hobbes to Hans Morgenthau, argued that human nature made transcending war unlikely. Neorealists replaced the emphasis on human nature with an emphasis on structure, arguing that war will be a permanent feature of interstate politics so long as anarchy persists. While approaching the issue from different angles, neorealists effectively share the pessimism of classical realists:

as a prominent feature of interstate politics, war can never be transcended.

Although realism imagines war as an enduring feature of international politics, realists advance important arguments about how to decrease the frequency of war, as well as the intensity of war when it does break out. Power balancing and deterrence are two such approaches.

Power Balancing

In Chapter 3, we saw that a balance of power is a particular configuration of the distribution of power in the international system. But theorists use the terms in other ways as well. Balance of power may refer to an equilibrium between any two parties, and balancing power may describe an approach to managing power and state security. The latter usage is relevant here.

The core logic of power balancing is simple: when power is unbalanced, stronger states will be tempted to use their advantage to go to war with weaker states in order to secure more power. The greater the imbalance, the greater the stronger state's temptation to do so. For the stronger state, the costs and risks of war seem low in comparison to potential gains, thus making war a rational strategy. But when aggressive, power-seeking states face others with relatively equal power, they are likely to be more hesitant to go to war because the costs of war are more likely to exceed the expected benefits.

Balance-of-power theorists therefore posit that states make rational and calculated evaluations of the costs and benefits of particular policies that determine the state's role in a balance of power. All states in the system are continually making choices to maintain their position vis-à-vis their adversaries, thereby maintaining a balance of power.

Alliances are the most important institutional tool for enhancing one's own security and balancing the perceived power potential of one's opponent. If an expanding state seems poised to achieve a dominant position, upsetting the current balance of power, threatened states can join with others against

the expanding state. For example, when Germany's power rose in the lead-up to World War II, the United States and United Kingdom allied with Russia to balance against Germany, despite the rivalry between them.

Balancing power can be applied at both the international and regional level. At the international level, for example, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained a relative balance of power during the Cold War. The United States allied with Western European states (and others) through NATO, and this alliance largely balanced against the Soviet Union's alliance with Eastern European states (and others) through the Warsaw Pact. If one of the superpowers augmented its power through the expansion of its alliances or through the acquisition of deadlier, more effective military weapons, the other responded in kind. Absolute gains were not as critical as relative gains; no matter how much total power one state accrued, neither state could afford to fall behind the other. Gaining allies among uncommitted states in the developing countries through foreign aid or military and diplomatic intervention was another way to ensure the superpowers balanced power. Not maintaining the power balance was too risky a strategy since both sides believed that their national survival was at stake.

Balances of power among states in specific geographic regions are also a way to manage state security. In South Asia, for example, a balance of power maintains a tense peace between India and Pakistan. In the Middle East, a complex set of overlapping balances has developed across different issue areas. At one level, the economically rich, oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia are balanced against the economically poor states of the core Middle East. At another level, a balance exists between Islamic militants (Iran), moderates (Egypt, Tunisia), and conservatives (Saudi Arabia). Iran and Saudi Arabia are also vying for power in the region, and a relative balance exists between them.

Some realist theorists assert that balancing power is the most important technique for managing state security. It is compatible with human nature and the nature of the state, which is to act to protect one's self-interest by maintaining

one's power position relative to that of others. If a state seeks preponderance through military acquisitions or offensive actions, then war against that state is acceptable under the balance-of-power system. If all states act similarly, the balance can be preserved without war.

One major limitation of the balance-of-power approach, however, is its requirement that states view established friendships with allies as expendable in times of change. According to the theory, should power shift, alliances should also shift to maintain the balance—regardless of friendship. But as liberals and constructivists observe, states exist in a kind of society and they resist giving up their "friends," even when power shifts. This idea may explain why, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, long-standing U.S. allies such as Britain did not abandon their alliance with the United States in NATO, even though the bipolar balance of power had collapsed. However, balance-of-power theorists would point out the current difficulties NATO states are having in maintaining the alliance. With no rival to balance against, the alliance is not necessary. If a state doesn't "need" its allies, it is more credible for a state to threaten to abandon the alliance to pressure those allies into making various concessions if they want to keep the alliance together. The United States did just this in 2018 when President Trump threatened to withdraw from NATO absent increased spending on defense by its European allies.

Deterrence

The mechanism that enables a balance of power to sustain peace is deterrence. At its most basic level, and as discussed in Chapter 5, deterrence is the manipulation of fear to prevent an unwanted action. A strong state's confidence of victory may tempt it to war. However, when power is balanced and no one state has a significant military advantage, the threat of being defeated in war could keep aggressive states from attacking in the first place. Deterrence is the means by which balancing power works to help states manage their security.

Deterrence theory posits that the credible threat of the use of force can prevent violence such as war. In its 2002 National

Security Strategy, for example, the United States made this type of threat explicit. The United States wrote that it will defend "the United States, the American people, our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our border."17 For deterrence to work, then, states must form alliances or build up their arsenals to present a credible threat of retaliation if attacked. Information regarding the threat must be conveyed to the opponent. Knowing that a damaging reaction will counter an aggressive action, the opponent will decide not to resort to force and thereby destroy its own society.

As initially developed, deterrence theory is based on several key assumptions.18 First, the theory assumes that rational decision makers want to avoid resorting to war in situations in which the anticipated cost of aggression is greater than the expected gain. Second, the theory assumes that nuclear weapons—one particularly intense form of harm—pose an unacceptable risk of mutual destruction, and thus decision makers will not initiate armed aggression against a nuclear state. Third, the theory assumes that alternatives to war are available to decision makers, irrespective of the issue of contention.

As logical as deterrence sounds, and as effective as it seemed during the Cold War—after all, no nuclear war occurred between the superpowers—the very assumptions on which deterrence is based are frequently subject to challenge. Are all top decision makers rational? Might not one individual or a group of individuals risk destruction in deciding to launch a first strike? Might some states be willing to sacrifice a large number of people, as Germany's Adolf Hitler, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, and Iraq's Saddam Hussein were willing to do in the past? How do states credibly convey information about their true capabilities to a potential adversary? Should they? Or would it make more sense to bluff or to lie? For states without nuclear weapons, or for states with nuclear weapons that are launching an attack against a nonnuclear state, the risks of war may seem acceptable: when one's own society is unlikely to be threatened with destruction, deterrence is more likely to fail.

*

IN FOCUS

Assumptions of Deterrence Theory

Decision makers are rational.

The likelihood of escalation to mutual destruction from warfare is high.

Alternatives to war are available.

Attempts to deter insecure states may backfire.

*

The rise of terrorism conducted by nonstate actors also appears to decrease the possibility that deterrence will work. Because nonstate actors do not hold territory, the threat to destroy such territory in a retaliatory strike cannot be a potent deterrent. Flexible networks—such as Al Qaeda—spread over different geographic areas, rather than an organizational hierarchy located within a particular state, make eliminating those networks very difficult. The increasing willingness of some groups to use suicide terrorism to achieve their objectives has made the logic of deterrence appear particularly shaky. Deterrence depends on the calculation that rational actors will never deliberately act to invite costly reprisals, yet suicide terrorists are willing to sacrifice their own lives. Since loss of life has traditionally been thought of as the highest of all costs, suicide terrorism appears to render deterrence meaningless.

Not only have terrorist groups made deterrence less effective, so, too, have new kinds of weapons and the supporting infrastructure decreased the utility of deterrence. Cyberweapons can undermine a state's command systems, yet identifying the "enemy" is difficult and takes time, especially in an environment where so many states and nonstate actors are capable of using technology. This has led one prominent defense analyst to posit "the decline of deterrence."19

Some realists continue to argue the effectiveness of deterrence. They highlight the important role that states play in aiding nonstate actors such as terrorists. States can deter other states from doing so through the threat of punishment, holding

complicit or negligent states accountable for the actions taken by nonstate actors. This, some realists argue, can help deter states from aiding violent nonstate actors, and thus prevent those nonstate actors from being able to use violence in the first place. Deterrence, they argue, can still work.

Realist approaches to managing state security rely mainly on fear, but as we have seen, they also imagine power in almost purely material terms. To the extent that changing norms or a rise in the power of ideas has changed world politics, can realist approaches to managing state security continue to be effective?

Liberal Approaches to Preventing War

Unlike realists, liberals have a theory that imagines a world without war. The core logic of the liberal position acknowledges the structural constraint of anarchy and accepts state insecurity as an important factor motivating interstate relations. However, liberal theorists argue that states seeking power, including economic power, will be led by self-interest into successively deeper and broader cooperation with other states, even if at times that cooperation is punctuated by war. Over time, cooperation may be institutionalized, making war less and less likely. Liberals also focus on the nature of a state's political system, arguing that, in contrast to the realist view, there are essentially "good" (democratic and economically open) and "bad" (authoritarian and economically closed) states. Over time, the rewards that accrue to good states will create pressures and incentives on more and more bad states to become responsible partners in the international system. Given these theoretical underpinnings, liberal approaches to managing state security call on the international community or international institutions (both organizations and treaties) to coordinate actions to reduce the likelihood and destructiveness of war. Two of those strategies are collective security and arms control agreements.

The Collective Security Ideal

Collective security is captured in the old adage "one for all and all for one." It posits that, in an effort to stop the aggressive and unlawful use of force by one state against another,

unlawful aggression will be met by united action: all (or many) states will unite against the aggressor. Potential aggressors will know this fact ahead of time, and thus will choose not to act.

Collective security makes several fundamental assumptions.20 One assumption is that the collective benefit of peace outweighs the individual benefits of war, even a successful war. Another assumption is that aggressors—no matter who they are, friends or foes—must be stopped. This assumption presumes that other members of the international community can easily identify the aggressor. Collective security also assumes moral clarity: the aggressor is morally wrong because all aggressors are morally wrong, and all those who are right must act in unison to meet the aggression. Finally, collective security assumes that aggressors know that the international community will act to punish an aggressor.

Of course, this idea is none other than deterrence, but with a twist. If all countries know that the international community will punish aggression, then would-be aggressors will be deterred from engaging in aggressive activity. The twist is that in liberal theory, states are more likely to calculate their interests collectively as shared interests than to calculate their interests individually, as in the realist view. The threat that deters potential aggressors comes from united action by the international community rather than from a singular more powerful state itself. But for collective security to work, the threat to take action must be credible and all potential enforcers must agree.

Collective security does not always work. In the period between the two world wars, despite the existence of the League of Nations, which was designed to implement collective security, Japan invaded Manchuria and Italy overran Ethiopia. In neither case did other states act as if it was in their collective interest to respond. Were Manchuria and Ethiopia really worth a world war? In these instances, collective security did not work because, as realists assert, the states capable of acting to halt the violence (particularly Britain and France) did not have sufficient national interest in doing so,

especially when the threat of another war with Germany seemed increasingly likely.

Collective security may also fail due to the fact that aggressors are not always easily identified. In 1967, Israel launched an armed attack against Egypt, clearly an act of aggression. The week before, however, Egypt had blocked Israeli access to the Red Sea, kicked the UN out of Sinai, and, in combination with Syria and Jordan, moved hundreds of tanks and planes closer to Israel. Clearly these, too, were acts of aggression. Twenty years earlier, the state of Israel had been carved out of Arab territory. That, too, was an act of aggression. Where does the aggression "begin"? The George W. Bush administration argued in 2003 that its invasion of Iraq (an act of aggression) was justified because Saddam Hussein was preparing to operationalize and possibly use a nuclear weapon—also an aggressive act. So who is the "guilty" aggressor?

Furthermore, even if an aggressor can be identified, is that party always morally wrong? Due to an understandable fixation on the individual and collective costs of war, collective-security theorists argue, by definition, yes. Yet others would argue that trying to right a previous wrong is not necessarily wrong; trying to make just a prior injustice is not always unjust.

Arms Control and Disarmament

Arms control and disarmament schemes have been the hope of many liberals over the years since the first Hague Convention of 1899. Since the nineteenth century, hundreds of treaties have been created that limit the militarization of the polar regions and space, that limit the types of weapons that may be used, and that even limit the testing and development of certain weapons (such as nuclear weapons) in the first place. Most signatories to these treaties actually abide by their treaty obligations, limiting the quantity and quality of arms they manufacture and use. Whatever the rationale for reductions in each individual state's case, the logic of this approach to security is straightforward: fewer weapons mean greater security. Regulating arms proliferation (arms control) and reducing the number of arms and limiting the types of

weapons employed (disarmament) should logically reduce the problem of the security dilemma.

During the Cold War, many arms control agreements were negotiated to reduce the threat of nuclear war. Through a series of agreements, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to limit the development of particular types of weapons, and in some cases to reduce their arsenals. Since the end of the Cold War and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, new arms control agreements continue to be negotiated between the United States and Russia. These arms control agreements are a success story for liberals.

Yet the actual enforcement of these agreements is difficult. Russia has repeatedly violated the arms control treaties agreed between the Soviet Union and the United States. For example, in the 2010s, Russia tested and deployed a cruise missile in violation of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Many suspect China is violating the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to which it acceded in 1984. A report from the U.S. Department of State issued in June 2020 stated that the United States "has compliance concerns with respect to Chinese military medical institutions' toxin research and development because of the potential dual-use applications [(i.e., applications not just for scientific research but also offensive military purposes)] and their potential as a biological threat."21 Without strict enforcement rules, such violations of arms control agreements are not surprising.

The logic of arms control is also fundamental to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for Iran denuclearization. In that 2015 agreement signed between Iran, the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, and the EU, Iran agreed to limit its program to enrich uranium under international inspections in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. In 2018, the Trump administration withdrew from the deal, arguing it failed to substantially limit Iran's nuclear program. Subsequently, Iran renewed its enrichment program. The Biden administration announced its intention to rejoin the agreement if Iran complies with the original terms. The diplomatic negotiations are difficult.

These examples suggest that the logic of arms control agreements is not impeccable. While, as some liberal theorists argue, arms control might lessen the security dilemma (the idea that an increase in one state's capabilities is a lessening of security for others, which leads them to increase their capabilities, making the first state less secure, and so on, as discussed in Chapter 3), it does not eliminate it. A state can still feel insecure if its enemy has greater relative military capabilities than it does, regardless of the absolute level of capabilities. For example, New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), a treaty signed in 2010 between the United States and Russia, calls for the parties to limit their nuclear weapons arsenals. The Trump administration argued that it would not renew the agreement unless China became a party to the treaty. The Biden administration, however, is renewing its commitment to New START and the JCPOA in the belief that limiting the number of nuclear weapons is a step toward reducing the dangers of the security dilemma.

Limited incremental disarmament remains a possibility. The Chemical Weapons Convention, for example, bans the development, production, and stockpiling of chemical weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 2021, is another possibility, but since none of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons has ratified it, that limited approach is unlikely to achieve its objective. Still, liberals place their faith in some arms control agreements based on a combination of the self-interest of states (these programs are expensive) and support from international institutions like the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, the complete disarmament envisioned by liberal thinkers is unlikely, given how risky it would be. Unilateral disarmament would place disarmed states in a highly insecure position, and cheaters could be rewarded.

Constructivist Approaches to Preventing War

Constructivists do not necessarily have a theoretical "answer" for how to prevent war. However, their focus on ideas, identities, and norms and how they change can provide important insights into the question.

Constructivists' focus on identities that are socially constructed through state interactions suggests that these identities can change as state interactions change. Cooperation could therefore arise between states that previously had been in conflict. Today, the same states involved in World War I and II are engaged in arguably the deepest level of cooperation between states in the international system: the European Union. Constructivists argue that institutions like the EU can create and regulate certain types of interactions that, over time, can influence states' perceptions of their identities and their understandings of self and others.22 States can thus become socialized to different methods of interaction, making war highly unlikely. Few would argue that a war is likely to break out between France and Germany today.

Socialization to certain norms against various aspects of military conflict is another path that constructivists might highlight as a way to reduce conflict. For example, antipersonnel land mines and cluster munitions were important tools of war for many decades. However, a campaign was taken up in the early 1990s pressuring states to ban their use because of their nondiscriminatory nature and the significant harm they inflict on noncombatants. Over time, states became socialized to these ideas, and in 1997 a treaty was created banning the use of land mines and calling for the destruction of those already built. To date, 164 states have become party to the treaty. What was once an important tool of war became taboo for most states in the international system. The norm is not perfect, however, as several states, including the United States, have not joined the treaty. The United States, which had agreed to limit its use of land mines to the Korean Peninsula, even rolled back that commitment in 2020. In April 2021, during a review of the issue, President Biden announced the United States would keep rules in place that allow troops to deploy landmines, as long as they are equipped with self-deactivating mechanisms.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Approaches to Preventing War

Theoretical Perspective

Possible Ways to Prevent War

Realism

Power balancing

Deterrence

Liberalism

Collective security

Arms control and disarmament

Constructivism

Socialization to cooperative norms

Changing identities

Spread of norms delegitimizing war

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESGoing Nuclear: A View from North Korea

By 2020, North Korea had an estimated 30 to 40 nuclear weapons with enough fissile material to produce 6 to 7 more nuclear weapons each year. It also unveiled the world's largest intercontinental ballistic missile in a military parade—a missile North Korea argues is capable of reaching U.S. territory. However, the nuclear program is costly. Why, then, has North Korea continued to pursue it?

The development of North Korea's nuclear program has raised several problems for its leaders. The program is expensive, requiring North Korean leaders to dedicate a significant portion of the state's budget to it. From 2004 to 2017, North Korea spent almost 25 percent of its GDP on the military each year—the highest percentage of military spending relative to GDP of any country. With spending so focused on the military, few funds are available to provide aid for the people, despite the country facing a critical food shortage. In 2020, the Workers' Party plenary acknowledged that their economic plans had failed to improve the lives of citizens. This problem has been exacerbated by the increasing levels of economic

sanctions that have been placed on North Korea in response to its nuclear program.

These economic woes have hit the lower class the hardest. A growing number of people believe they are paying the price for a nuclear program that does not benefit them in any way. Their discontent with ruling elites who have remained wealthy despite North Korea's economic problems has been growing, forcing leaders to increase oppression and crackdown on the population. Given the program is creating such domestic problems, why do North Korean leaders continue to pursue their nuclear ambitions?

North Korean leaders face two other problems that have led them to continue their nuclear program despite its negative effects. First, in the face of the severe food shortage, North Korean leaders have been able to leverage their nuclear program to obtain food aid, helping them deal with the crisis without having to spend their own funds. On several occasions, North Korean leaders have stated that they would give up their nuclear ambitions in return for such aid, though they have not complied once the aid is received. Its nuclear program remains a bargaining chip that North Korean leaders can continue to use in the future to obtain food aid and other possible types of concessions.

Second, and more importantly, North Korean leaders want to remain in power, and current geopolitics threatens their ability to do so. For North Korean leaders, the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya against Muammar Qaddafi demonstrated the United States' willingness to invade enemy states and overthrow their governments. Being highly concerned about this problem, North Korean leaders' choice is to either bandwagon or balance.

North Korea's leaders cannot bandwagon with the United States without sacrificing their political legitimacy. Indeed, they frame their image as leading North Korea to be an important socialist barrier standing up in opposition to U.S. "imperialism." North Korea's military approach has therefore been to balance against U.S. power by developing a nuclear

arsenal with the capability to threaten the United States and its allies. The nuclear program provides leverage to the North Korean government in its push for a formal peace treaty with the United States. Such a treaty would pressure the United States to withdraw its military presence in South Korea—a major goal of North Korean leaders in their quest to ensure their own security. The nuclear program is therefore an important tool North Korean leaders are using to help deter a military invasion and prevent a toppling of their leadership position.

Despite the costs, North Korean leaders' continued development of their nuclear program is thus rational.a The effectiveness of their balancing effort was illustrated by U.S. President Trump's willingness to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un in 2018 after almost a decade of no contact. Some observers say that the meetings between Kim and Trump symbolically legitimated Kim's leadership, signifying international recognition of his regime's rule in North Korea. Continued short-range missile testing by North Korea in 2021 has led President Biden to announce that he will not meet with Kim Jong-Un under present circumstances. Thus, whether North Korea will abandon its nuclear program or severely limit it in return for U.S. assurances of North Korean security remains to be seen.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un inspects nuclear machinery.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Do you think North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons is rational? Why or why not?

What would liberal theorists recommend states do to stop North Korea's nuclear program? Do you think that solution would work? What about a realist solution?

Do you think that the geopolitical reasoning underlying North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons is justified? Why or why not?

*

A norm against the proliferation of nuclear weapons has also spread throughout the international system. In 1968, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), was negotiated. In force since 1970, the NPT spells out the rules of nuclear proliferation—the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and technology related to nuclear weapons. Signatory countries without nuclear weapons agree not to acquire or develop them. States that do have nuclear weapons promise not to transfer the technology to nonnuclear states and to eventually dismantle their own. Showing the importance of this treaty and the spread of the nonproliferation norm, three states that previously had nuclear weapons programs—South Africa, Brazil, and Argentina—dismantled their programs in the 1990s and became parties to the treaty. In addition, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons left on their territory after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As with many norms, however, adherence is not perfect. Several key nuclear states and threshold nonnuclear states remain outside the treaty, including India, Israel, and Pakistan. North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 and has continued with its nuclear weapons development program.

Norms regarding the legitimacy of war have also spread. As discussed below, for war to be legitimate, it must be either an act of self-defense or authorized by the UN Security Council. If states abide by the desire to take legitimate actions and do not just choose to enter into war whenever they feel it is in their interest, the prevalence of war is likely to be reduced. Demonstrating the existence of the legitimacy norm, instead of simply going to war in Iraq in 2003, the United States approached the UN Security Council for authorization to use force against Iraq. If the norm were not in existence, there would be little explanation for this action by the United States. However, although the UN Security Council did not grant the authorization, the United States still went to war in Iraq. Whether or not this norm of legitimacy actually does constrain state behavior, and can thus help prevent war, is therefore still an open question.

Check Your Understanding

Which term refers to the situation when states threaten to use force to prevent war? power balancing

diversionary war

deterrence

compellence

Which three factors do liberals argue can help prevent war? democracy, economic interdependence, balance of power

democracy, international institutions, balance of power

democracy, economic interdependence, international institutions

economic interdependence, international institutions, balance of power

Glossary

arms control

regulating arms research, manufacturing, deployment, and proliferation of weapons systems

disarmament

reducing the amount of arms and the types of weapons employed by a state

nuclear proliferation

the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and technology related to nuclear weapons and information to states not recognized under the Treaty on the NonProliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Endnotes

Note 17: George W. Bush, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” September 17, 2002, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/index.html (accessed 2/1/10). Return to reference 17

Note 18: See Glenn Snyder, Deterrence and Defense (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); and Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in

American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). Return to reference 18

Note 19: Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "The Eroding Balance of Terror: The Decline of Deterrence," Foreign Affairs 98:1 (January/February 2019): 62. Return to reference 19

Note 20: For a complete treatment, see Inis Claude, Power and International Relations (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 94–204. Return to reference 20

Note 21: U.S. Department of State, Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments, June 2020, www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-Adherence-to-and-Compliance-with-Arms-Control-Nonproliferation-and-Disarmament-Agreements-and-Commitments-Compliance-Report-1.pdf (accessed 7/19/20). Return to reference 21

Note 22: Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," International Organization 46:2 (Spring 1992): 391–425; and Jeffrey T. Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework," International Organization 59:4 (Autumn 2005): 801–26. Return to reference 22

Note a: John Delury, quoted in Stephen Evans, "Is North Korea's Leader Kim Jong-un Rational?" BBC News, March 18, 2017, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39269783 (accessed 12/11/17). Return to reference a

LAWS OF WAR

War is not always illegal; in some cases, war might be justified. The question, then, is, when is it legal for states to go to war, and when is it not? And what actions are states allowed to take in war, and what are they not allowed to do? Two categories of international law deal with these issues. The first type, jus ad bellum, deals with the question of when it is legal to go to war. Once the decision to go to war has been made, the second type, jus in bello, deals with the question of what acts are considered legal and illegal when fighting the war.

Jus ad Bellum

Normative political theorists draw our attention to the classical just war tradition. Although just war theory is a Western and Christian doctrine dating from medieval times, it draws on ancient Greek philosophy and precepts found in the Koran. As developed by Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Hugo Grotius, just war theory asserts that several criteria can make the decision to enter a war a just one.23 There must be a just cause (self-defense or the defense of others) and a declaration of intent by a competent authority. The leaders need to have the correct intentions, desiring to end abuses and establish a just peace. They also need to have exhausted all other possibilities for ending the abuse, going to war only as a last resort. Finally, forces must be removed rapidly after the objectives have been secured. Because states choose war for a variety of reasons, however, it is rarely easy to assess the justness of a particular cause or of particular intentions.

Israeli drone strikes in Palestine have destroyed the homes and lives of many noncombatants. Should drones be used for warfare when they often harm civilian communities?

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In modern times, these ideas have been codified into international law in the UN Charter. In general, using force against another sovereign state (i.e., war) is not legal under international law. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter explicitly states that states may not use force against each other: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” There are, however, two conditions under which this general ban on the use of force against another state can be violated legally under international law. If either condition is met, it is considered legal for a state to use force against another state.

First, Article 51 of the UN Charter allows a state to use force against another state when acting in self-defense. It reads, “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.” So Poland’s

use of force in response to Germany's invasion in September 1939 at the beginning of World War II would not be considered illegal under international law today, as it would have fallen under the category of self-defense as defined by the UN Charter.

Controversy exists as to whether "preemptive self-defense" falls under this category. For example, in January 2020, the United States carried out a drone strike, assassinating Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian general who led the Quds Force and was considered to be the second in command in Iran. The United States justified the drone attack as an act of self-defense: Iran's past actions, together with intelligence collected, indicated that the Quds Force "posed a threat to the United States in Iraq, and the air strike against Soleimani was intended to protect United States personnel and deter future Iranian attack plans against United States forces and interests in Iraq."24 However, many people argue that this idea of self-defense against a hypothetical potential future attack has no basis in international law.

It is also questionable whether a state can use force against another in the name of self-defense if the reason for going to war is that the government of the other state has not suppressed a threat to the first state. For example, the United States asserted that Iraq had a valid right of self-defense to use force in Syria because the IS was attacking Iraq from its havens in Syria, and the Syrian government had failed to suppress that threat. Because Iraq asked the United States for assistance in defending itself, the United States maintained that its air and drone strikes in Syria against the IS were legal. These types of questions about the legality of the use of force with regard to self-defense continue to be debated.

A second article in the Charter, Article 42, allows a state to attack another state if the attack is authorized by the UN Security Council as "necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security." In the 1991 Gulf War, the UN Security Council passed a resolution allowing a joint, multicountry force (led by the United States) to use military means to remove Iraq from Kuwait after it had invaded the

country. The action undertaken with UN authorization was therefore legal.

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IN FOCUS

Jus ad Bellum (When It Is Legal to Go to War)

When acting in self-defense

DEBATED: When acting in preemptive self-defense

When given permission by UN Security Council

DEBATED: When another state fails to suppress a threat to one's own state

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Jus in Bello

The just war tradition also addresses legitimate conduct in war (known as jus in bello). Such legitimate conduct requires several qualifications, each an important pillar of just war theory. First, combatants and noncombatants must be differentiated, with noncombatants protected from harm as much as possible—hence the principle of noncombatant immunity. Second, the means of violence used must be proportionate to the ends to be achieved—the principle of proportionality. Finally, unnecessary human suffering should be avoided at all costs. This third qualification led to the banning of the use of particularly heinous weapons.

Many of these central norms of the just war tradition were codified into legally binding treaties. In 1899 and 1907 the Hague Conventions were created to regulate methods of warfare, and in 1949 four Geneva Conventions (and their two subsequent protocols in 1977) were created to regulate the protection of noncombatants, including civilians, prisoners of war, and injured soldiers. Many other treaties have followed, targeting new and more specific aspects of just war norms. For example, because mustard gas caused especially cruel deaths during World War I, its use was subsequently outlawed, paving the way for future chemical and biological warfare conventions.

Contemporary debates surround the question of how newer killing technologies affect our assessments of moral and ethical conduct during war. This question arises because in many cases, these new technologies challenge our ability to uphold the norms of the just war tradition. It is impossible to restrict the use of nuclear weapons in time and space, inevitably killing noncombatants and violating the principle of noncombatant immunity. Because of the severe destructive potential of nuclear weapons, their use would violate the principle of proportionality of means and ends.

Other weapons like antipersonnel land mines and cluster munitions have also come under fire for the danger they pose to noncombatants. Although land mines were originally viewed as legitimate weapons, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has succeeded in shifting perceptions of these weapons by emphasizing the indiscriminate effect of their capacity to harm. Land mines pose a threat to the safety of civilians long after a war has ended. In 2008, the Convention on Cluster Munitions was signed, banning and providing assistance for clearing weapons with a high potential to harm noncombatants. The campaigns against antipersonnel land mines and cluster munitions reflect growing pressure to restrict or eliminate the use of certain weapons and practices in accordance with just war principles. Constructivists can rightly cite the power of norms and socialization to alter the behavior (and identity) of both state and nonstate actors in this regard.

*

IN FOCUS

Jus in Bello (Legal Requirements When Engaged in War)

Combatants and noncombatants must be differentiated.

Noncombatants must be protected from harm as much as possible (noncombatant immunity).

The means of violence used must be proportionate to the ends to be achieved (proportionality).

Unnecessary human suffering should be avoided at all costs.

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Cyberwarfare and “Just” War

Cyberwarfare has added a new dimension to the question of “just” war. In particular, the question is whether a cyberattack is prohibited under international law and under what conditions a cyberattack can justify legal retaliation in self-defense. The UN Charter’s general prohibition on war is framed in terms of a prohibition on the “threat or use of force.” The UN Charter allows for retaliation in self-defense. But does a cyberattack constitute a “use of force” or an “armed attack”? Are there certain conditions when it does and certain conditions when it does not? If so, what are those conditions?

Three main positions have been put forward in the debate about cyberattacks and the right of self-defense under international law.25 On one extreme, the “instrument-based” approach argues that a cyberattack can only count as an armed attack if it uses “traditional military weapons.” Such attacks might include bombings of computer servers or cables, but not attacks actually arising in cyberspace. On the other extreme, the “target-based” approach classifies any cyberattack that targets a sufficiently important computer system as an armed attack, regardless of whether it caused any physical destruction or casualties. Falling between these two extreme positions, the “effects-based” approach classifies a cyberattack as an armed attack based on the “gravity” of its effects. This is the most mainstream of the three approaches.

That debate over cyberattacks and the right of self-defense became more than hypothetical in 2021 when the cyberattack SolarWinds was revealed. That attack penetrated the information technology systems of over 300,000 customers including the U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security as well as U.S. defense contractors. Destructive malware that permits perpetrators to mobilize operational control systems may have then been implanted. While access into computer networks may not in itself be a cause for war, access with the widespread ability to cause harm may well be.26 In 2021, the Biden administration formally blamed Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service for the

SolarWinds attacks. To punish Russia for these actions, as well as for its activities in Ukraine and interference in U.S. elections, the United States imposed a suite of economic and diplomatic sanctions, making it clear that other retaliatory measures are possible.

Cyberwarfare also adds complications to the question of legal actions with regard to permissible conduct during war—jus in bello. First, a debate exists about cyberwarfare and noncombatant immunity. On the one hand, cyberattacks need to be spread to be effective, and they are also known to have psychological effects, causing anxiety and inhibiting rational political thinking. So even if they do not cause physical harm, cyberattacks inevitably violate the principle of noncombatant immunity. On the other hand, some argue that cyberattacks can actually decrease the casualties suffered by noncombatants because they put noncombatants at less risk than physical wars do. Using cyberwarfare instead of physical warfare may therefore save more noncombatants than it harms.

Second, cyberwarfare also raises the issue of proportionality. In cyberwarfare, as we have seen, the results are often unpredictable. Ensuring proportionality of an attack is therefore difficult. Moreover, because it is difficult to know what the actual effects of an attack are, it is also difficult to judge the level of response to a cyberattack that would be proportional. Is a military attack in response to a cyberattack a proportional response? What if the attack was not carried out by a government? If so, is responding with an attack against a state proportional? Cyberwarfare raises many new questions and debates about how a "just" war can be fought today.

Check Your Understanding

_____deals with the question of when it is legal to go to war, and _____ deals with the question of acceptable conduct during war. Jus ad bellum; jus in bello

Jus in bello; jus ad bellum

Deterrence; compellence

Compellence; deterrence

Two countries, Ishgard and Gridania, go to war over disputed territories. Both sides are careful to only launch attacks against military outposts and troops. This is an example of both sides working to uphold what principle of just war? self-defense

justness of cause

proportionality of violence and ends

noncombatant immunity

Glossary

jus ad bellum

laws that deal with when it is just/legal to go to war

jus in bello

laws that define what acts are considered legal and illegal when fighting a war

just war tradition

the idea that wars must be judged according to two categories of justice: (1) jus ad bellum, or the justness of war itself; and (2) jus in bello, or the justness of each actor's conduct in war

noncombatant immunity

a core principle of international humanitarian law (formerly, "the laws of war") that holds that people not bearing arms in a conflict may not be deliberately targeted or systematically harmed; this category includes unarmed civilians, soldiers who have surrendered, and soldiers who are too severely injured to defend themselves

Endnotes

Note 23: For contemporary views, see Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2006). Return to reference 23

Note 24: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, "Notice on the Legal and Policy Frameworks Guiding the United States' Use of Military Force and Related National Security Operations: United States Military Action against Qassem Soleimani," 2020,

https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/_cache/files/4/3/4362ca46-3a7d-43e8-a3ec-be0245705722/6E1A0F30F9204E380A7AD0C84EC572EC.doc148.pdf (accessed 7/19/20). Return to reference 24

Note 25: Oona A. Hathaway et al., "The Law of CyberAttack," California Law Review 100:4 (2012): 817–85. Return to reference 25

Note 26: See Yevgeny Vindman, "Is the SolarWinds Cyberattack an Act of War? It Is, If the United Sates Says It Is." Lawfare, January 26, 2021. Return to reference 26

IN SUM: INTERNATIONAL AND STATE SECURITY TODAY

National security and conflict between states (of various forms) is a principal topic in the study of international relations today. Conflicts can occur between states, within states, and even in cyberspace. Understanding the causes of these conflicts, as well as the steps that can be taken to ensure national security, is therefore of central importance to policy makers and international relations scholars.

However, states are not always engaged in conflict. They can (and often do) cooperate. They sign treaties, they create and work together in institutions, and they negotiate ends to conflict. In addition to focusing on conflict, studying cooperation between states is therefore also important in the study of international relations. We turn to this issue in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

How can we identify an aggressor in international conflicts? Is such identification important? Why or why not?

An American decision maker charged with U.S.-Russian Federation policy requests policy memos from realists (an offensive realist and a defensive realist), a liberal, and a constructivist. How might their respective recommendations differ?

Realists, liberals, and constructivists pose different "solutions" to the problem of war. Which of these approaches do you think

is likely to be most effective? Why?

Cybersecurity raises interesting questions regarding just war. Do you think a cyberattack constitutes the use of force, and thus gives a state the right to respond in self-defense? Or are cyberattacks different than conventional attacks? What if they are not perpetrated by states? How should state leaders respond?

Key Terms

arms control (p. 207) asymmetric conflict (p. 186) commercial peace theory (p. 198) conventional wars (p. 185) cyberspace (p. 193)

cyberwarfare (p. 193) democratic peace theory (p. 197) disarmament (p. 207)

guerrilla warfare (p. 186) interstate wars (p. 181) intrastate wars (p. 183) jus ad bellum (p. 213) jus in bello (p. 213) just war tradition (p. 213) national security (p. 178) noncombatant immunity (p. 215) nonviolent resistance (p. 187) nuclear proliferation (p. 212) terrorism (p. 187)

unconventional wars (p. 185) war (p. 181)

Glossary

arms control

regulating arms research, manufacturing, deployment, and proliferation of weapons systems

asymmetric conflict

conflict between a more powerful party and significantly weaker party

commercial peace theory

a theory that states that are interdependent through trade and investment are less likely to go to war; conflict is too economically costly

conventional wars

regular armies openly engaged in combat with the objective to win control of the state by defeating the enemy’s military force

on the battlefield

cyberspace

the entire spectrum of networked information and communication systems and devices

cyberwarfare

state actions taken to penetrate another state's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption

democratic peace theory

theory supported by empirical evidence that democratic states do not fight wars against each other, but do fight wars against authoritarian states

disarmament

reducing the amount of arms and the types of weapons employed by a state

guerrilla warfare

the use of irregular armed forces to undermine the will of an incumbent government (or its foreign support) by selectively attacking the government's vulnerable points or personnel over a prolonged period of time; often used by weaker power

interstate wars

wars between states

intrastate wars

wars that take place within a state (also known as civil wars)

jus ad bellum

laws that deal with when it is just/legal to go to war

jus in bello

laws that define what acts are considered legal and illegal when fighting a war

just war tradition

the idea that wars must be judged according to two categories of justice: (1) jus ad bellum, or the justness of war itself; and

(2) jus in bello, or the justness of each actor's conduct in war

national security

the ability of a state to protect its interests, secrets, and citizens from threats (both external and internal) that endanger them

noncombatant immunity

a core principle of international humanitarian law (formerly, "the laws of war") that holds that people not bearing arms in a conflict may not be deliberately targeted or systematically harmed; this category includes unarmed civilians, soldiers who have surrendered, and soldiers who are too severely injured to defend themselves

nonviolent resistance

resistance to established authority that systematically precludes the use of violence as a tactic; common examples include strikes, sit-ins, and protest marches

nuclear proliferation

the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and technology related to nuclear weapons and information to states not recognized under the Treaty on the NonProliferation of Nuclear Weapons

terrorism

an act that is political in nature or intent committed by nonstate actors that targets noncombatants (a form of asymmetric conflict)

unconventional wars

wars distinguished by willingness to flout restrictions on legitimate targets of violence or refuse to accept the traditional outcomes of battles as an indicator of victory or defeat

war

an organized and deliberate political act by an established political authority that causes 1,000 or more deaths in a 12-month period and involves at least two actors capable of harming each other

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International Cooperation and International Law

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The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was ratified in 1993 and went into effect in 1997. Since its ratification, many states have cooperated with the agreement and eliminated their chemical weapons stock, though some, like Syria and the United States, have not completed the destruction of their chemical weapons. Why would a state choose not to cooperate when many others have chosen to cooperate?

By 2020, over 98 percent of countries declared their chemical weapons stockpiles had been verifiably destroyed. Of the 193 parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), almost none have used chemical weapons since 1997 when the treaty entered into force. Much credit for these accomplishments is given to the CWC, in which states agreed not to develop, produce, or otherwise acquire, stockpile, or use chemical weapons, and to destroy any chemical weapons and production facilities that they already had in place.

In many ways, the treaty was successful, but the CWC did not fully meet its goals. Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan never joined the treaty and the United States has not met its time line for the destruction of its chemical weapons (though it projects they will be destroyed by the end of 2023). In addition, some parties to the treaty have continued to develop and/or stockpile chemical weapons (as a 2020 report from the U.S. State Department suspected of Iran, Myanmar, Russia, and Syria), and Syria actually conducted chemical weapons attacks in 2017.

Why have most states cooperated, joining the CWC and choosing to comply with it while others have not? In fact, given that all states are concerned about their own security, and chemical weapons are some of the most powerful weapons, why have any cooperated? Why would a state not develop a chemical weapons program, which could help it build up its power and thus better protect itself? And even if some states did not want to develop chemical weapons, if the

treaty could not stop other states from doing so, why did they bother to make the treaty in the first place?

In this chapter, we seek to better understand initiatives like the CWC and the questions they raise: How and why do states cooperate instead of escalating conflict? And why do they (often) agree to follow laws that govern the world outside their own borders? Wars might get the biggest headlines, but international cooperation is happening every day. Understanding its dynamics is crucial to understanding international relations today.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Define international cooperation and explain why realists argue that achieving it can be difficult.

Describe how the theoretical perspectives explain instances of cooperation.

Define international law and describe its various sources.

Explain the reasons why states comply with international law.

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In addition to state security, cooperation between states is a central topic in the study of international relations. Political scientists treat cooperation as a situation in which actors adjust their behavior to accommodate the actual or anticipated preferences of other actors in the pursuit of common goals. Those preferences can neither be identical (or there would be no behavioral adjustment required) nor irreconcilable (as no adjustment of behavior could ever accommodate both sides).1 International cooperation therefore exists when states adopt behavior consistent with the preferences of other states in order to achieve common objectives like avoiding war, reconciling trade imbalances, or stopping the proliferation of cybercrime. This chapter focuses on two key aspects of the study of international cooperation: (1) the difficulties states face when trying to cooperate and how they could be solved, and (2) the creation and enforcement of international law, which codifies rules to help govern international cooperation.

Glossary

international cooperation

when states adopt behavior that is consistent with the preferences of other states in order to achieve common objectives

Endnotes

Note 01: Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," World Politics 38:1 (1985): 226–54. Return to reference 1

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

While conflicts occur between states, war is not the usual outcome. We see a significant amount of cooperation between states on a daily basis. Given that states are sovereign and that there is no world government forcing cooperation or preventing states from attacking each other, why do states cooperate with one another? The theories of international relations have different approaches to answering this question. Realists point out the difficulties underpinning international cooperation, while liberals provide insights into how states overcome those difficulties. Constructivists are largely agnostic as to whether states will cooperate or not, but highlight certain conditions under which we can expect one versus the other.

Realism and the Cooperation Problem

Realists recognize that international cooperation is difficult to achieve. Two key problems contribute to this difficulty—the relative gains problem and what they call the "prisoner's dilemma."

According to realists, the first problem is that states focus on relative gains. As discussed in Chapter 3, relative gains refers to how much more one state gains over another from a given interaction. States focus on relative gains because the anarchic international system creates a self-help world. A state can only

truly rely on its own power to defend itself from coercion by others. Its ability to do so depends on how much power it has relative to other states. A gain in power for one state relative to another means it is better able to coerce that other state. In an effort to prevent this from happening, states focus on relative gains.

Because they focus on relative gains, states are likely to be hesitant to engage in cooperation, as the benefits of cooperation are likely to be unevenly distributed among participating states. For example, if two states are trading partners, and after each trade one gains $3 billion and the other gains $1.5 billion, both gain in absolute terms. However, over time the former will accumulate significantly more wealth than the latter. It can then use that advantage to coerce the other. In a realist world where state survival depends on having more power relative to other states, and where it is almost never (if ever) the case that states gain in exactly the same way from cooperation, it is likely to be difficult for states to cooperate even if they both can benefit from cooperation in absolute terms.

As an example of how cooperation can be hindered by relative gains concerns and the security dilemma, consider an arms race. Arms races are costly. They require states to develop and maintain expensive military arsenals. However, if one state increases its military armaments while another does not, it gains militarily relative to that other state. This increases the first state's ability to coerce or attack the second. Fearing this possibility, the second state will therefore increase its armaments as well. In doing so, it gains militarily relative to the first state, which then spurs the first state to further increase its armaments, and so on.

Recognizing states' concerns with relative gains can therefore help us understand why we see states engaging in costly nuclear arms races. For example, following World War II, the United States had a monopoly on nuclear weapons. However, the Soviet Union was actively pursuing the technology in order to catch up with U.S. capabilities. At the beginning of the Cold War, it demonstrated its own acquisition of nuclear weapons, detonating its first nuclear bomb in 1949.

Recognizing that the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons had changed the states' relative capabilities, the United States then began to pursue the development of an even stronger weapon, detonating its first hydrogen bomb in 1952. The Soviet Union responded by developing its own hydrogen bomb, detonating its first in 1953. In 1954, the United States detonated an even larger hydrogen bomb. This back-and-forth continued throughout the Cold War, as the United States and the Soviet Union developed intercontinental ballistic missiles, planes, and submarines capable of delivering nuclear bombs to the other side and steadily increased their weapons stockpiles. By 1981, the United States had about 8,000 intercontinental ballistic missiles and the Soviet Union had about 7,000. The United States had about 4,000 planes capable of delivering a nuclear bomb, and the Soviet Union had 5,000. By the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was estimated to be spending over 25 percent of its GDP on the military, and the U.S. was over $350 billion.2 Both would have benefited in absolute terms if they did not have to pay the costs of increasing and maintaining their nuclear arsenals. However, if one had cooperated in this way, it would have faced the risk that the other side would not, thus increasing the other side's relative military power. The risk associated with adopting cooperative behavior is high when relative gains are on the line. Realists therefore argue that getting states to cooperate is difficult.

The second problem that makes cooperation difficult, according to realists, is the problem of cheating by the other state. If you are being nice, someone else can potentially exploit that niceness in order to gain more, and you will be hurt in the process. This is often described as a "prisoner's dilemma."

The prisoner's dilemma is the story of two prisoners who are interrogated separately for an alleged crime. The police have enough evidence to convict both prisoners on a minor charge but need testimony from one in order to convict the other for a suspected major charge. An interrogator tells each prisoner that if one testifies against the other while the other stays silent, the one who testifies will go free—the sentence for the minor charge will be reduced for helping the police. The one

who stays silent, however, will get a one-year prison term—the sentence for the major charge. If both testify, both will get six-month prison terms—the punishment for the major charge will be reduced for helping the police. If both stay silent, they will both receive one-month prison terms for the minor charge. Staying silent is referred to as "cooperating" with the other prisoner, while testifying against the other prisoner is referred to as "defecting."

In this "prisoner's dilemma" situation, each prisoner has an individual incentive to defect. If Prisoner A stays silent, Prisoner B is best off testifying and going free rather than staying silent as well and facing a one-month prison term. If Prisoner A testifies, Prisoner B is still best off testifying and receiving only the six-month prisoner term instead of the one-year term. Regardless of what Prisoner A does, Prisoner B is better off testifying. Prisoner A faces the same incentives. The outcome of the interaction is therefore that both will choose to testify against the other (defect).

Consider President Trump's decision in 2017 to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate change agreement. One of the central arguments for doing so was that adhering to the agreement would require the United States to impose costly regulatory requirements on its industries. If the United States then "cooperated" and did so, while states such as China and India "defected" from the agreement and did not, U.S. industries would become less able to compete against industries from those states. The potential loss of economic competitiveness was an important concern that contributed to the decision to withdraw from the cooperative agreement.

The "dilemma" of these prisoner's dilemma situations is that both sides end up defecting but would have been better off if they both had cooperated. If both prisoners had cooperated, they would each have received only a one-month sentence instead of the six-month sentence they received because they both defected. If all states cooperated and adopted regulatory policies to combat climate change, they would further their environmental goals. Yet achieving cooperation is difficult because each side has an incentive to cheat rather than uphold its side of the cooperative outcome. Cheating while the other

side cooperates allows a prisoner to go free; a state to have more competitive industries. Knowing that this incentive to cheat exists, each side is driven away from the choice to cooperate in the first place. Mutual defection results even if mutual cooperation is more beneficial.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and the "vaccine nationalism" that characterized the distribution of a vaccine provide an interesting illustration of the prisoner's dilemma.3 Indeed, richer countries and pharmaceutical companies have been criticized for protecting patents for developing a vaccine, which has prevented poorer countries from learning to make vaccines for themselves. However, as many scientists and scholars argue, states need to cooperate in producing and distributing a vaccine. Doing so would provide an efficient way to disrupt the spread of the virus and help the vaccine reach the most vulnerable populations worldwide, not just the citizens of the countries rich enough to manufacture or purchase vaccines in large quantities. It would also help to prevent geopolitical conflicts that may arise over competition for the vaccine. Moreover, if poorer countries are not granted access to the vaccine, even rich countries with the vaccine would suffer economically, as foreign consumers that are ill or unemployed would likely not be purchasing goods exported from the rich states. While all states would thus benefit from cooperation, the fear of cheating looms large. If one state cooperates and shares its vaccines while others seize local vaccines and/or place export restrictions on materials needed to make those vaccines, the cooperating state would be left with vaccine shortages. Cooperation is thus a risky maneuver in the face of the potential for cheating by others—cheating which could cost the lives of a state's citizens.

For realists, then, the cooperation problem persists in international relations because the international system is anarchic. No authority exists to force states to cooperate. Without such an authority, states are left to make their choices based solely on their own self-interest. Realists argue that these self-interested choices point away from cooperation—either because of concerns for relative gains or because of concerns that other states will cheat and exploit cooperative

efforts. Yet while we do see many instances of noncooperation in the international system, we also see cooperation. States sign arms control and arms reduction agreements. They negotiate trade and environmental protection agreements. Most importantly, they often uphold those commitments. Why, if cooperation is so hard, do we see these types of actions?

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IN FOCUS

The Cooperation Problem

Cooperation is difficult.

States face the relative gains problem.

The cooperation problem reflects the realist view of cooperation.

States face the cheating problem (prisoner's dilemma).

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Neoliberal Institutionalism and Cooperation

The branch of liberal theory referred to as neoliberal institutionalism addresses the cooperation problem posed by realists most directly. Like realists, neoliberal institutionalists accept the fact that the international system is anarchic, that states are unitary actors that pursue their own self-interest in a rational way, and that no authority can force states to cooperate. Although neoliberal institutionalists begin at the same starting point as realists do, they expect that states will often cooperate, arguing that it is often in their own self-interest to do so. This self-interest in cooperation stems from the fact that states interact continuously, meaning that they have the opportunity to reciprocate cooperation or noncooperation.

Realists would likely highlight the actions of the United States at the G7 conference in June 2018 as an example of the prevalence of noncooperation, even on nonsecurity issues such as trade. Here, former president Trump sits defiant against other G7 leaders.

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As shown above, if the prisoner's dilemma is played only once, it is in each prisoner's self-interest to defect. However, if the prisoner's dilemma is played repeatedly, the likelihood of reciprocity (referred to as a "tit-for-tat" strategy) makes it rational for each prisoner to cooperate rather than defect.4 If either prisoner testified against the other in a first round, then in a second round that prisoner could expect retaliation. That prisoner would receive the short-term gain of going free in the first round, but would face at least a six-month sentence when the other prisoner retaliated in the next round. Over time, the six-month sentences would add up, making the prison term, overall, significantly longer than it would have been if the prisoners had cooperated and only received the one-month sentence in each round. The expectation of reciprocity across repeated interactions makes it rational for the prisoners to cooperate rather than defect. The long-term benefits of cooperation outweigh the short-term benefits of defecting.

States in the international system have the same type of repeated interaction. They are not faced with a one-time round of "play": they confront each other repeatedly across a wide range of issues. Across these interactions, reciprocity can therefore be an effective strategy for eliciting cooperation. The European Union (EU)'s generalized system of preferences (GSP) provides an illustrative example. GSP grants developing states access to the EU market in return for those states signing on to (and following) a variety of human rights treaties, labor protections treaties, and environmental treaties that are central to the EU's interests. Both sides benefit from the reciprocal cooperative relationship—the developing states are able to export goods without tariffs to sell in the EU, and the EU is able to further its interests in a variety of other issue areas.

According to neoliberal institutionalists, international institutions—a term that, as defined in Chapter 3, refers to both international organizations and international law and treaties—play an important role in fostering the reciprocity between states that can sustain cooperation. First, institutions provide a guaranteed framework of interactions, and thus increase states' expectations that they will have repeated

interactions, continuing to interact far into the future. In other words, they lengthen the shadow of the future. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy provide expectations about consistent future interactions regarding security and defense policy among their member states. The United States–Mexico–Canada trade agreement and the treaties of the European Union create expectations about consistent future interactions regarding trade among their member states. The expectation of repeated future interactions created by these institutions increases the potential for cooperation between their member states in these various issue areas by helping create the expectation that reciprocity can and will be used.

Second, international institutions—international treaties, in particular—create a "bright line" of a behavioral standard that enables states to align their expectations about what cooperative behavior looks like.5 This is important because reciprocity can only be an effective strategy if both states know that their cooperative behavior will be met with the same in return. It may not always be clear, however, what behavior is considered cooperative. For example, states might agree to treat their prisoners of war humanely. But what is humane treatment? Is forcing prisoners of war to provide information cooperating with the agreement or not? What about using them for labor? Institutions like the treaties that make up international law regarding conduct during war help make cooperative and noncooperative behavior easier to identify. The 1929 Geneva Convention lays out specific rules for what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior toward prisoners of war. These rules allow states to more easily identify instances when another state is acting cooperatively, and reciprocate accordingly.

Third, and finally, international institutions—international organizations, in particular—can provide states with information about the behavior being adopted by other states that is critical for reciprocity to be effective. States cannot reciprocate actions that they do not or cannot observe. Yet states cannot always tell whether or not other states are

reducing carbon emissions, refraining from erecting barriers to free trade, or developing nuclear weapons. How can states reward cooperation and punish defection if they do not know what other states are doing? Institutions can monitor state actions and provide states with this type of information. The Kyoto Protocol established a verification system to monitor states' carbon emissions and share that information with the rest of the world. The World Trade Organization has a dispute settlement procedure that collects information and evaluates whether state actions are in violation of international trade laws. The International Atomic Energy Agency monitors state behavior regarding the use of nuclear technology. The information provided by these types of institutions helps states know when other states are cooperating and when they are defecting, allowing them to respond in turn. Overall, international institutions play a central role in fostering cooperation in neoliberal institutionalist theory.

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IN FOCUS

Neoliberal Institutionalist Approach to Cooperation

The cooperation problem can be overcome.

Repeated interactions and reciprocity can help overcome the prisoner's dilemma.

International institutions can lengthen the shadow of the future.

International institutions provide information on cooperation and defection.

International institutions can provide information about cooperation and defection of others.

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Other Liberal Explanations of Cooperation

While neoliberal institutionalism provides the most direct answer to the realists' cooperation problem, other liberal theories also provide explanations for why states cooperate. Classical liberal thinkers put forth a positive conception of

human nature to help understand why states are likely to cooperate. Liberals believe humans can learn from history and can thus achieve social progress. In other words, humans are willing and able to construct a more peaceful society and will thus naturally cooperate.

Other liberal theories provide more rational explanations for why states cooperate. As famously put forth by Immanuel Kant in his book Perpetual Peace (1795), liberals highlight three important factors that discourage states from engaging in conflict and foster international cooperation: democracy (Kant's reference to a "republican constitution"), economic interdependence (Kant's reference to a "commercial spirit of trade"), and international institutions (Kant's reference to a "federation for free states"). Together, these factors are labeled the "Kantian triangle of peace," and their existence can help explain the prevalence of cooperation between states.6

First, democratic political processes foster cooperative interactions. In a democracy, other states can observe the internal deliberations that lead to foreign policy decisions. This promotes greater trust in the sincerity of leaders' public statements and increases the ability of other states to monitor the democratic leaders' actions. If democratic leaders defect from their international commitments, there may be political costs. If both sides fear being caught cheating, then cooperation is more likely, at least among democratic states.

Second, liberal theory highlights the central role of economic interdependence in fostering cooperation. Being economically interdependent means that states rely on one another for goods and/or economic gain. The more interdependent states are, the greater the economic losses they will experience from war, and thus the less likely they are to engage in conflict with one another. Economic interdependence, which is ever increasing with globalization, can therefore help explain why we often see cooperation rather than conflict between states.

Third, international institutions—both formal organizations and treaties—play an important role in liberal explanations for cooperation. In addition to the role they play in facilitating cooperation in the context of neoliberal institutionalist

arguments, liberals also argue that institutions reduce transaction costs (the costs of making an exchange). This facilitates states' ability to negotiate cooperative agreements. For example, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) created a forum for multilateral trade negotiations. Without the GATT, states would have had to negotiate a large network of bilateral or smaller multilateral agreements liberalizing trade between them. Not only would doing so have created a fragmented trading system with different rules and standards across a large number of different agreements, but it also would have been extremely costly because of the resources required for such a large number of negotiations. In the institutional context of the GATT, states only had to participate in one negotiation and secure one agreement covering their trade relationship with a large number of other states.

International institutions not only facilitate the negotiation of agreements by lowering transaction costs, but also play a role in fostering cooperation after those agreements have been reached. In particular, by providing a forum for action, they help coordinate their member states' behavior in order to bring about outcomes that are in their collective and individual long-term interests. Liberal theorists recognize that states are sovereign actors. However, they argue that states are often willing to respect the principles of international institutions in order to fulfill their long-term interests, even at the cost of forgoing short-term individual gains.

Institutions also help make states' commitments more credible. Becoming a party to a treaty or international organization makes the commitment embodied in that institution public and formal, which adds transparency to the process. A state is therefore likely to face reputational costs at both the domestic and international level if it violates that commitment. Raising the costs of violation makes it more likely that other states will believe the commitment will be upheld.7

The neoliberal institutionalist and other liberal arguments thus highlight some potential solutions to the COVID-19 vaccine prisoner's dilemma. First, vaccine supply chains are inherently

global. No one state has access to all of the materials needed to carry out large-scale manufacturing of a vaccine. In addition, vaccine allocation is a repeated game. Multiple vaccines have been developed, each with its own costs and benefits. This interdependence and repeated game nature of vaccine allocation creates the opportunity for reciprocity: states can retaliate against those that engage in "vaccine nationalism" early on by withholding essential inputs or not providing them with vaccines that are developed down the road. Institutions could also help by adding transparency to the process of licensing and distributing vaccines—providing information about states' actions that could help to assuage the fear of cheating.8 Indeed, these factors have likely played a key role as we see international cooperation and the central role of international institutions at work with COVAX—a global effort co-led by Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and the World Health Organization (WHO), which aims to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world. The cooperation problem, liberals would argue, can be mitigated.

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IN FOCUS

Other Liberal Approaches to Cooperation

The cooperation problem can be overcome.

Sharing similar democratic institutions and values can foster cooperation.

International institutions facilitate negotiations that can lead to cooperation.

International institutions make commitments more credible.

Classical liberal theorists argue that individuals will naturally cooperate out of innate characteristics of humanity.

Economic interdependence can foster cooperation.

International institutions coordinate cooperative behavior.

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Constructivism and Cooperation

While realists anticipate a general lack of cooperation between states, and liberals anticipate considerable amounts of cooperation, constructivists are largely agnostic as to whether conflict or cooperation is more likely. As Alexander Wendt put it, “Anarchy is what states make of it.”9 Whether we see cooperation or conflict between states depends on a variety of factors, including states’ identities, the nature of their shared understandings, and norms that are in place.

Identities play a central role in constructivist accounts of international cooperation. Just as divergent identities can help us understand why we might see conflict between states, convergent identities can help us understand why we might see cooperation. Constructivists often point to the shared identity of democracies, in particular, to help explain cooperation. Democratic decision-making processes are governed by a norm of establishing nonviolent and compromise-oriented resolutions to conflict. The norms that regulate their domestic processes shape the identity of democracies, and are thus expected to regulate their interactions at the international level as well. This creates for democracies a mutual expectation of nonviolent and compromise-oriented interactions between them. This, in turn, fosters cooperation.

Liberals also highlight the role that norms associated with democracies can play in fostering cooperation. The main difference between liberal and constructivist explanations for cooperation is that constructivists view democracy as an identity, rather than a mere characteristic of states. For constructivists, having a democratic identity (and sharing that identity) is what influences cooperation.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) provides an illustrative example. At the end of World War II, the United States had a monopoly on advanced military power and an economy that outweighed the economy of the Soviet Union, as well as the economies of all of Western Europe together. Despite the United States’ superior power, France and Britain did not perceive the United States as threatening. Their shared

identity as democracies, and the peaceful interactions that shared identity was expected to create, fostered a mutual sense of an "us" in which cooperative interactions were expected—an identity that stood in contrast to the Soviet Union, "them," whose nondemocratic identity did not foster an expectation of cooperative interactions. Rather than allying with the Soviet Union to balance against the United States, France and Britain chose to cooperate with the United States, forming a security alliance with it (NATO).10

The continuation of NATO after the end of the Cold War similarly points to the importance of this shared democratic identity in sustaining cooperation. Instead of disintegrating after the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has continued to exist. While the shared enemy, the Soviet Union, disappeared, the shared identity and values of the NATO democracies did not change with the end of the Cold War. NATO, which embodied those values, therefore did not become obsolete. In fact, democracy actually spread into Eastern Europe, and the expansion of NATO to include these new countries reflects the desire of democracies, with their shared identity, to work together in the international system. This shared identity, which is reinforced at meetings of NATO members, is considered critical. Hence, when President Trump failed to confirm those shared values, he was widely criticized for betraying the foundation of the NATO agreement.

In addition, for all states—even states that are not democracies—shared understandings that create expectations about the nature of their interactions can foster cooperation. As Wendt describes, in the international anarchic environment, states will begin to engage in interactions. These interactions can be amicable, such as the adoption of positive, cooperative reciprocal moves, or they can be conflictual. If the interactions are conflictual, cooperation between the states is less likely to develop. If the interactions are positive, however, mutual expectations that the other side will adopt cooperative behavior can arise over time. What began as spontaneous cooperative reciprocity can transform into mutually expected habits (norms). The norm of cooperation between the states thus drives further cooperation.11 While liberals argue that

strategic reciprocity sustains cooperation throughout time, constructivists argue that a norm of cooperation that has developed between certain states over time best explains cooperation between them today. For constructivists, not every move is a strategic calculation. Cooperation is often driven simply by states' shared expectations that their interactions will be cooperative.

For constructivists, not only can existing norms foster cooperation, but states can also become socialized to new norms that shape their interests in a way that fosters new forms of cooperation. For example, a norm exists today that medical personnel should be granted immunity during war and should be allowed to treat the wounded from both sides. This was not always a norm, however. The Red Cross had to work to persuade states that medical personnel and resources should not be captured as spoils of war and should be allowed to care for victims on both sides. Without immunity, medical personnel were disincentivized to come to the battlefield to treat the sick and wounded. States began to recognize that it was not in their interests to take actions that discouraged medical personnel from treating their wounded. Moreover, they recognized that it was in their overarching interests to have their own wounded soldiers cared for on the enemy's battlefield. In order to get cooperation from other states, they would have to grant immunity to medical personnel on their own territory, as well as allow them to treat wounded enemy combatants. States' interests, which had previously been focused on seizing medical personnel and preventing them from treating enemy combatants, shifted. As states' interests shifted, the norm of immunity for the wounded and medical personnel spread. States began to cooperate and protect medical personnel on their own territory, and opposing states did so as well. As this example illustrates, not only can norms of behavior foster cooperation, but states' interests can also be reshaped as they become socialized to new cooperation-inducing norms.

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IN FOCUS

Constructivist Approaches to Cooperation

The cooperation problem can be overcome.

Cooperation is most likely between states with convergent identities.

States can be socialized to norms of cooperation.

Shared democratic identities and norms can foster cooperation.

A norm of cooperation can develop.

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Overall, there are many possible explanations for why we see cooperation among states. Institutions, in particular, play an important role in this process. One of the most critical institutions for facilitating cooperation is international law.

Check Your Understanding

Why, even at its most basic level, is cooperation in international relations difficult to achieve? There are no norms for cooperation.

Human beings are hard wired to compete rather than cooperate.

States have no incentive to compromise.

The international system is anarchic.

Which statement best explains how neoliberal institutionalists explain state cooperation? States will cooperate because international institutions prohibit coercive actions.

International institutions serve as a framework for state cooperation because individuals are irrational.

States will cooperate since it is innate for individuals, who make up the state, to naturally cooperate.

International institutions provide the structure necessary to facilitate cooperation, but do not necessarily guarantee that states will cooperate.

Glossary

prisoner’s dilemma

a theoretical game in which rational players (states or individuals) choose options that lead to outcomes (payoffs) such that all players are worse off than under a different set of choices

shadow of the future

states' expectations about how long they will continue to interact in the future

economic interdependence

states mutually rely on one another for goods and/or economic gain

transaction costs

the costs of making an exchange

Endnotes

Note 02: These data come from two sources. C. N. Trueman, "The Nuclear Arms Race," The History Learning Site, March 9, 2015, August 16, 2016, http://historylearningsite.co.uk (accessed 12/15/17); John Swift, "The Soviet-American Arms Race," History Review, March 2009. Return to reference 2

Note 03: Thomas J. Bollyky and Chad P. Bown, "The Tragedy of Vaccine Nationalism," Foreign Affairs 99:5 (September/October 2020): 96–108. Return to reference 3

Note 04: Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Return to reference 4

Note 05: James D. Morrow, "When Do States Follow the Laws of War?" American Political Science Review 101:3 (August 2007): 559–72. Return to reference 5

Note 06: Bruce Russett and John Oneal, Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000). Return to reference 6

Note 07: Keohane, After Hegemony, p. 97. Return to reference 7

Note 08: Bollyky and Bown, "Tragedy," 96–108. Return to reference 8

Note 09: Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” International Organization 46:2 (1992): 391–425. Return to reference 9

Note 10: Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO,” in The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 357–99. Return to reference 10

Note 11: Wendt, “Anarchy,” 391–425. Return to reference 11

INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law consists of a body of rules and norms regulating interactions among states, between states and IGOs, and, in more limited cases, among IGOs, states, and individuals. It is an important type of international institution that codifies methods of cooperation and provides a mechanism for settling disputes between states. It also serves a variety of other functions: setting a body of expectations, providing order, protecting the status quo, and legitimating the use of force by a government to maintain order. In addition, international law serves ethical and moral functions, aiming in most cases to be fair and equitable and delineating what is socially and culturally desirable.

International law developed thousands of years before contemporary international organizations. Treaties between city-states and communities can be found in Mesopotamia; the Greeks and the Romans differentiated among different kinds of law, including international law; and during the Middle Ages, the authority of the Catholic Church developed canon law applying to all believers internationally. Yet international law is largely a product of Western civilization. The man dubbed the father of international law, the Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), elucidated a number of fundamental principles that serve as the foundation for modern international law and international organization. For Grotius, all international relations are subject to the rule of law—that is, a law of nations and the law of nature, the latter serving as the ethical basis for the former. Grotian thinking rejects the idea that states can do whatever they wish and that war is the

supreme right of states and the hallmark of their sovereignty. Grotius, a classic idealist, believed that states, like people, basically are rational and law abiding, capable of achieving cooperative goals.

The Grotian tradition holds that order in international relations is based on the rule of law. Although Grotius himself was not concerned with an organization for administering this rule of law, many subsequent theorists have seen an organizational structure as a vital component in realizing the principles of international order. The Grotian tradition was challenged by the Westphalian tradition, which established the notion of state sovereignty within a territorial space (see Chapter 2). A persistent tension arose between the Westphalian tradition, with its emphasis on sovereignty, and the Grotian tradition, with its focus on law and order. Did affirmation of state sovereignty mean that international law was irrelevant? Could international law undermine, or even threaten, state sovereignty? Would states join an international body that could challenge or even subvert their own sovereignty?

These questions of sovereignty are especially important because international law demands obedience and compels behavior. Compliance by states is not flawless, but in many cases we do see states cooperating and acting in accordance with international law. Why do sovereign states do so? To answer this question, it is important to consider the various sources of international law and the ways it might be enforced in the international system.

Sources of International Law

In individual states, domestic laws are made by legislatures, adjudicated by a judiciary, and enforced by an executive. In the international system, however, there is no world government, no legislature, and no executive. Where does international law come from? Two of the most important sources are customs and treaties.

Customs

International law, like domestic law, comes from a variety of sources. Virtually all law emerges from custom. Either a

hegemon or a group of states solves a problem in a particular way; these habits become ingrained as more states follow the same custom, and eventually the body codifies the custom into law. For example, Great Britain and later the United States were primarily responsible for developing the law of the sea. As great seafaring powers, each state adopted practices—establishing rights for passage through straits, methods of signaling other ships, conduct during war, and the like—that became the customary law of the sea and were eventually codified into treaties. The laws protecting diplomats and embassies likewise emerged from long-standing customs.

But customary law is limited. For one thing, it often develops slowly since multiple cases are needed to demonstrate the existence of a new customary practice. British naval custom evolved into the law of the sea over several hundred years. Sometimes customs become outmoded. For example, the three-mile territorial extension from shore was established because that was the distance a cannonball could fly. Eventually, law caught up with changes in technology, and states were granted a 12-mile extension of territory into the ocean. But even then, a period of conflict between advocates of the new and supporters of the old often follows. Occasionally, customs change more rapidly. The norms and prohibition against genocide developed in just one generation, as discussed in Chapter 10. Furthermore, not all states participate in the making of customary law, let alone assent to the customs that have become law through European-centered practices. And the fact that customary law is initially uncodified leads to ambiguity in interpretation.

Treaties

International law also arises from treaties, the dominant source of law today. Treaties (sometimes called conventions, covenants, or protocols) are explicitly written agreements among states that lay out rights and obligations. Their creation and enforcement today are governed by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (the “treaty on treaties”) that was adopted in 1969. Over 25,000 treaties have been created covering myriad issues, including peace, arms control, trade, human rights, refugees, and the environment. (See, for

example, Table 10.1 and Table 11.1.) Even issues like air, land, and water transport and space exploration have dedicated treaties. In all of these issues areas, treaties are legally binding on states: only major changes in circumstances give states the right not to follow treaties they have ratified.

Treaties are created by states themselves through a process of negotiation and acceptance. The International Law Commission, under the United Nations General Assembly, drafts some, and states then negotiate and change them. Almost all, however, are both drafted and negotiated by states. First, states meet (sometimes across multiple sessions) and work out the details of the treaty. The "adoption" of a treaty signifies that negotiations over the text have come to an end. As specified by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the adoption of a treaty is typically done either by consensus or by at least a two-thirds majority vote of the states participating in the negotiations. Once a treaty has been adopted, it is opened for signature. States can then choose to sign or not sign, regardless of whether they participated in the negotiations. For example, the United States participated in the negotiation of the Law of the Sea Treaty but never signed it.

Treaties are crucial in establishing law across all areas of the international system. In 1963, representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union signed the Outer Space Treaty, which provided a framework for the international laws of space travel and exploration.

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Some treaties specify that a signature is all that is needed for a state to become legally bound by the treaty. Once these treaties enter into force, they are legally binding on the states that have signed them. However, most treaties require more than just a signature. Most require an additional process of ratification, as many states have domestic requirements that mandate legislative approval of treaties. Only if states ratify these types of treaties through their domestic process will they be legally bound by them. Signature in these cases is not enough. Many states have signed treaties that they did not ratify and are therefore not bound by those treaties' obligations. For

example, the United States signed but not did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and many of the major human rights treaties.

Even after ratification, a state is not legally bound to a treaty until it enters into force. Treaties usually enter into force at a time specified in the treaty itself, sometimes with specific requirements. For example, the Kyoto Protocol (1997) could not enter into force until at least 55 parties ratified it, with those ratifiers including industrialized countries that accounted for at least 55 percent of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in 1990. These types of provisions sometimes cause interesting problems for states. Despite having signed the Kyoto Protocol, the United States (which accounted for about 36 percent of CO2 emissions in 1990) made clear in the 2000s that it would not ratify it. This meant that even though over 120 states had ratified the protocol, the 55 percent CO2 emissions requirement would not be met and it could therefore not enter into force. The ratifiers thus had to go to Russia and agree to not require any emission reductions on its part if it participated. The treaty entered into force, but without U.S. participation and without emissions reduction requirements for Russia.

Once a treaty enters into force, the states that have ratified it are legally bound by its provisions. States can also join a treaty even after it has entered into force and even if it is no longer open for signature. This is the same as a ratification process, but it is referred to as “acceding” to the treaty. States that have acceded are legally bound once they have done so, just like the states that ratified it. For example, in 2002 the United Kingdom acceded to the Law of the Sea Treaty. The treaty had entered into force in 1994. Once the UK acceded in 2002, it was legally bound by the treaty, though from 1994 until 2002 it had not been.

Overall, both customs and treaties are important sources of international law. The question, then, is when and why states comply with them.

Enforcement Mechanisms and State Compliance

States are sovereign actors, and compliance with international law is clearly not absolute. Russia violated the treaty banning American and Russian land-based intermediate-range missiles when it deployed such a weapon in 2017. Syria violated the treaty prohibiting the use of chemical weapons when it employed such weapons in Khan Sheikhoun in 2017. Portugal violated the Law of the Sea Treaty in 2004 by refusing entry into the country and the right of innocent passage through its territorial waters to a ship that fulfilled all the requirements. The United States violated the UN Charter by going to war with Iraq in 2003 without approval by the UN Security Council. There are many other examples of such violations. Yet these violations are exceptions. Most of the time, most states do comply with international law. When and why do they do so? Several mechanisms exist that help to produce state compliance (see Table 7.1).

Vertical Enforcement

Vertical enforcement is a legal process whereby one actor works to constrain the actions of another actor over which it has authority in order to secure its compliance with the law. This is the way that domestic law is enforced. If someone violates domestic law, the government of that state has the authority to punish that individual through its police and judicial system. The threat of this punishment motivates citizens to comply with the law. While no world government and no world police exist to enforce international law in the same way, some mechanisms for vertical enforcement do exist in the international system. In particular, states have created certain international institutions designed to help ensure state compliance with international law.

TABLE 7.1

Enforcement of International Law

TYPE OF ENFORCEMENT	METHOD	EXAMPLES
Vertical enforcement (top-down)		

An international institution with authority over a state secures compliance.

In 2016, the European Court of Justice fined Greece 10 million euros upon request from the European Commission for breaking EU laws regarding the disposal of waste.

Vertical enforcement (bottom-up)

National and local courts can enforce international law.

In 2020, the Brazilian Supreme Court cited international law to support a decision protecting indigenous peoples' rights from harmful government actions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Horizontal enforcement

States secure compliance from other states.

In 2015, coercive economic sanctions on Iran helped get it to agree to halt its nuclear program.

Self-interest

States benefit from the cooperative behavior resulting from the treaties they sign; they want to continue to foster that beneficial behavior.

In 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement entered into force, and it is estimated to boost economic gains across the continent by $450 billion for those who are compliant.

Norms and ethics

States follow international rules because they are seen as legitimate and doing so is the "right thing to do."

In 2015, recognizing the legitimacy of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and its rulings, Nicaragua agreed to abide by the ICJ's decision that Costa Rica had sovereignty over a disputed territory.

The most prominent example is the European Union (EU). As discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, the EU consists of several institutions. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union legislates EU law, the European

Commission proposes new EU legislation and executes EU law, and, along with member states themselves, the European Court of Justice interprets and enforces EU law. These different organs of the EU are all above the level of the member states, and European law supersedes national laws in many issue areas. The EU institutions help enforce state compliance with the EU laws. The European Court of Justice rules on whether or not national laws are compliant with EU law in virtually every topic of European integration, and can require states to change their national laws if they are found out of compliance. The European Court of Justice can even authorize the European Commission to sanction a state found out of compliance. This method of enforcement of EU law is a prime example of vertical enforcement of international law.

Beyond the EU, states have created a wide array of international courts tasked with interpreting international law and ruling on cases regarding state compliance. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the most prominent example. The ICJ is one of the organs of the United Nations established by the UN Charter, as discussed in Chapter 9. It has two key roles. It settles legal disputes between states in accordance with international law ("contentious cases") and it gives advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by UN organs. It has ruled on a number of cases covering issues including territorial disputes, maritime disputes and questions regarding the law of the sea, state jurisdiction, diplomatic and consular law, and even allegations regarding the unlawful use of force. In many cases, states abide by the ICJ's rulings. For example, in 1999, the court ruled on a dispute between Botswana and Namibia over an island located in the Chobe River. The court ruled that the island belonged to Botswana, and Namibia announced it would abide by the decision. Similarly, in 2015, the court ruled on a dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua over the sovereignty of a patch of wetlands on the San Juan River. It ruled that Costa Rica had sovereignty over the disputed territory, and that by digging channels in the area and establishing military presence on what was Costa Rican territory, Nicaragua had violated Costa Rica's territory and sovereignty. In 2017, the court ordered that

Nicaragua must pay compensation to Costa Rica, which Nicaragua did in March 2018.

Although the ICJ has been responsible for some significant decisions, it is a fairly weak institution for several reasons. First, the court actually hears very few cases; from 1946 to 2020, the ICJ has adjudicated 178 contentious cases (with 14 pending) and has issued only 27 advisory opinions. Since the end of the Cold War, however, its caseload has increased. Ever since the small developing country of Nicaragua won a judicial victory over the United States in 1986, developing countries have shown greater trust in the court. Although procedures have changed to speed up the lengthy process, the court's noncompulsory jurisdiction provision still limits its caseload. Both parties must agree to the court's jurisdiction before a case is taken. This stands in stark contrast to domestic courts, which enjoy compulsory jurisdiction. A person accused of a crime is compelled to judgment. No state is compelled to submit to the ICJ. For the ICJ to have jurisdiction over a case, all states in the dispute must formally agree to allow the ICJ jurisdiction.

Second, when cases are heard, they rarely deal with the major controversies of the day, such as the war in Vietnam, the invasion of Afghanistan, or the unraveling of the Soviet Union or of Yugoslavia. Those controversies are generally political and outside the court's reach, although interstate boundary disputes are major issues on the court's agenda. These have included cases concerning maritime disputes, including delimitation of the North Sea continental shelf, fisheries jurisdiction in the Gulf of Maine, and the maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria. The court has also ruled on the legality of nuclear tests, environmental protection, and genocide, among other issues. Advisory cases, though they do not enjoy the force of law, have been on some consequential issues, including Israel's construction of the barrier wall in the occupied Palestinian territories (opinion issued in 2004) and Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (opinion issued in 2010). Both of these were highly political issues.

Third, only states may initiate proceedings; individuals and nongovernmental actors such as multinational corporations

cannot. This stipulation excludes the court from dealing with contemporary disputes involving states and nonstate actors, such as terrorist and paramilitary groups, NGOs, and private corporations.

The ICJ may not be a strong enforcer of international law, but with greater legalization of international issues, there has been an increase in the number of international courts and an increased willingness by developing countries to use international judicial bodies, especially since the Cold War's end. These new courts, over 20 permanent judicial institutions and more than 70 other international institutions that exercise judicial or quasi-judicial functions, are part of a group of "new-style" courts.12 These courts enjoy compulsory jurisdiction and allow nonstate actors to litigate. They not only resolve disputes but also assess state compliance with international law and review the legal validity of state and international legislative and administrative acts. There has been a significant increase in the volume of binding rulings issued by this growing number of international courts. About 37,000 such rulings have been issued, with more than 90 percent of those occurring since 1990. Thus, even without a central enforcer, they can have a significant impact.

Vertical enforcement can also occur from the bottom up; national and even local courts can be enforcers of international law. Such courts have broad jurisdiction: they may hear cases occurring on their territory in which international law is invoked, or cases involving their own citizens who live elsewhere; they may hear any case to which the principle of universal jurisdiction applies. Under universal jurisdiction, states may claim jurisdiction if an individual's conduct is sufficiently heinous to violate the laws of all states. Several states claimed such jurisdiction for the genocide in World War II and, more recently, for war crimes in Bosnia, Croatia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, among others. In the European Union, national and local courts are a vital source of law. A citizen of an EU country can ask a national court to invalidate any provision of domestic law found to be in conflict with provisions of the EU treaty. A citizen can also seek invalidation of a national law found to be in conflict with self-

executing provisions of community directives issued by the Council of the European Union. Thus, in the European system, national courts are both essential sources of European community law and enforcers of that law.

At the same time, however, it is important to note that without enforcement mechanisms, international courts are limited in their ability to enforce international law against sovereign states. When the ICJ ruled against the United States in its 1986 Nicaragua v. United States decision, the United States simply withdrew its acceptance of ICJ jurisdiction and refused to pay the reparations awarded to Nicaragua in the decision. Similarly, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (an international tribunal in The Hague) ruled against China in 2016, arguing that its claims to sovereignty over islands in the South China Sea had no legal basis and that the harm it caused to the marine environment through the construction of artificial islands in the area was in violation of international law. China simply refused to abide by the decision, stating that it neither accepted nor recognized it. While vertical enforcement mechanisms do exist, the effectiveness as a method of enforcement is spotty. Other enforcement mechanisms have proven more effective.

Horizontal Enforcement

Horizontal enforcement is a process whereby states work to elicit compliance with international law by other states; state interactions foster compliance. Two main factors drive such horizontal enforcement—power and reciprocity.

Realists highlight the important role that state power plays in eliciting compliance with international law. States do not simply choose to comply with international law. Instead, they comply because more powerful states make them. The powerful, however, are not constrained in this same way, and therefore we are most likely to see compliance by weaker states that are forced to comply by more powerful ones. This argument dates back to Thucydides, who wrote in History of the Peloponnesian War that “the strong do what they can and the weak states suffer what they must.”

Several mechanisms exist that more powerful states can use to elicit compliance by other states, including diplomacy, economic statecraft, and use of force, as discussed in Chapter 5. Why did Iran sign an agreement in 2015 to halt its nuclear program? It did so in part because it was coerced into doing so by the economic sanctions placed on it by powerful states acting through the UN Security Council. Why did Iraq leave Kuwait after invading it in the early 1990s? It did so partly because more powerful states coerced it into doing so by using military force against it. For realists, actions by powerful states help explain why we see compliance by others.

Liberals also highlight the role these tools of statecraft play in helping to foster state compliance with international law. But they contend, rightly in many cases, that the use of these mechanisms by one state alone is apt to be ineffective. A diplomatic protest from a single state is likely to be ignored, although diplomatic sanctions from a group can be more effective. Economic boycotts and sanctions by one state will be ineffective as long as the transgressor state has multiple trading partners that it can turn to. For enforcement to be most effective, all states must join together in collective action against the violator of international law. In the view of liberals, states find protection and solace in collective action and collective security. The economic sanctions against Iran that helped get it to agree to end its nuclear program in 2015 and the military actions against Iraq in the 1990s were carried out not by a single powerful state but by many states coordinating their efforts through the UN. Multilateral action, according to liberals, is essential.

Liberals—neoliberal institutionalists, in particular—also highlight the importance of reciprocity in eliciting compliance. In the anarchic system where the prisoner's dilemma exists, states can help elicit cooperation by engaging in tit-for-tat interactions. If you do not cooperate with me, I will not cooperate with you; if you do cooperate with me, I will cooperate with you. Compliance with international laws, which codify these cooperative interactions, is one way this cooperation is manifested. The desire to reap the gains that stem from reciprocal cooperative actions incentivizes states to

comply with the laws codifying those cooperative interactions. For example, despite incentives that might exist to harm or extort information from prisoners of war, states cooperate with the 1929 Geneva Convention in order to secure cooperation from other states in return.

Self-Interest

Both realists and liberals agree that compliance relies generally on states and their individual self-interest. States benefit from participating in making the rules through treaties, or else they would not participate in making or ratifying them. They can ensure, through participation, that those rules will be compatible with their interests. States benefit from knowing that other states generally respect territory, airspace, and property rights; that international products and people are safe to move across national borders; and that diplomats can safely carry out their duties with international protection. States find it beneficial to "lock in" their commitment, for both domestic and international tranquility. States therefore comply most of the time.

Neoliberal institutionalists also rely on the idea of self-interest to explain compliance. The horizontal mechanism of reciprocity can be effective in fostering international cooperation precisely because of states' own self-interest in obtaining benefits they can receive from cooperating. Complying by adopting the cooperative behavior called for by international law and receiving compliance in return yields greater gains than not complying and receiving noncompliance in return.

However, as realists argue, compliance may not always be the most beneficial strategy. When states' self-interest points to behavior that is noncompliant, we will see noncompliance. States are not "bound" by international law—it is simply in their self-interest to comply most of the time.

Other studies show that in many cases states' self-interest points to a desire to comply, but they often lack the bureaucratic or managerial capacity to do so.13 For example, many environmental agreements require states to establish regulatory structures in order to comply with their obligations.

This can be not only difficult to do, but also very costly. Many developing countries are therefore unable to create these types of structures. Because states know that lack of capacity can be an important reason for noncompliance, international institutions are often created in order to assist countries in their implementation of certain international agreements. For example, the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol was specifically created in order to assist developing countries in lowering their ozone-depleting emissions as required by the Montreal Protocol. This institution has many functions, including providing funds and technical assistance to help developing countries establish the regulatory structures needed for them to comply with the requirements of the protocol.

Normative and Ethical Explanations

Constructivists and some liberals highlight normative factors that influence state compliance with international law. Much of international law reflects norms of the international system. Treaties are created in order to uphold norms related to human rights, liberalization of trade, protection of the environment, and more. Some scholars argue that we see compliance with these laws because states respect the norms on which they are based.

Similar to the norms-based argument, some scholars propose an ethical reasoning for why states comply. They argue that states comply with international law because it is the "right thing to do." States want to do what is right and moral, and international law reflects what is right. States want to be looked on positively and respected by world public opinion. They therefore fear that they will be labeled as pariahs and lose face and prestige in the international system if they adopt noncompliant behavior.

The desire for legitimacy is also an important norm in the international system, and international laws are also often viewed as legitimate—they are supported logically and justifiably. States therefore feel a "compliance pull" toward behavior consistent with those laws.14 The legitimacy of these laws might stem from the fact that a law was made through

multilateral negotiations, and therefore is the product of agreement among a wide variety of states. Legitimacy might also stem from the substantive nature of the laws themselves. For example, it is seen as legitimate for a law to require states to respect human rights and diplomatic immunity. Laws that provide due process in a dispute or distributive justice among states might also be viewed as legitimate.

The idea of legitimacy might be why some countries work hard to argue that behavior others see as noncompliant is in fact compliant. Why would states justify their actions to other states unless they believed that the rule they are thought to be breaking is legitimate? For example, many states, most legal authorities, and most NGOs argued that the United States was not compliant with human rights laws in its treatment of individuals captured during the Afghanistan conflict. These laws were viewed as legitimate by the international community, and the United States therefore worked to defend its actions as being in accordance with those laws. Based on the arguments of its government lawyers, the United States contended that since the prisoners did not represent a state, they were "enemy combatants"—a category not found in the Geneva Conventions. Moreover, prisoners were not being tortured, according to their interpretation of the word torture, as laid out in the Convention against Torture. However, these arguments were not viewed as legitimate by most of the international community, and in 2020, the International Criminal Court opened an investigation into actions taken by all parties involved in the Afghanistan conflict, including U.S. forces.

Some liberals and constructivists argue that democracy plays an important role in eliciting compliance with international law. Democracies share certain attributes such as representative government, civil and political rights protections, and a commitment to the rule of law. Individuals and organizations within democratic states respect these qualities at the domestic level, and this shapes the preferences of their leaders. Acting on these preferences, democratic states are therefore more likely to comply with international law—

particularly in relation to other democracies, which have similar preferences.15

Bodies of International Law

International law deals with many different issue areas, including war, trade, human rights, and the environment. There is even international law governing conduct regarding the seas, the Arctic, and outer space. Chapter 6 discussed international law regarding war, covering laws on entering into war (jus ad bellum) as well as laws on acceptable conduct during war (jus in bello). Chapter 8 discusses issues of international law regarding trade and investment. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 discuss international law in the realm of human rights, the environment, health, and migration. While these are some of the most commonly discussed types of international law, there are other important issue areas in which international law plays a central role in state interactions today: international criminal law and the law of the sea.

International Criminal Law

States have negotiated many treaties related to criminal law, addressing both procedural issues (information sharing, evidence gathering, and extradition) and substantive transnational issues (terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, organized crime, and cybercrime).

Mutual legal assistance treaties regularize cooperation between governments in the gathering of evidence. They require actions such as sharing information about a crime, searching and seizing evidence, tracking suspects or witnesses, and taking written testimony. Such treaties are numerous. The United States alone has more than 60 mutual legal assistance treaties; its partners range from neighboring states such as Canada and Mexico to countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America. Many other pairs of states have negotiated such treaties. Argentina and Panama, South Africa and India, Indonesia and Australia, and Thailand and Canada are just a few. Together, over 400 mutual legal assistance treaties exist today, creating a large network of cooperation in criminal matters.

International criminal law also deals with issues of extradition. Extradition refers to the process of delivering an individual from the territory of one state to another state for prosecution or to serve a sentence. Extradition treaties are just as prevalent, if not more prevalent, than mutual legal assistance treaties. The United States alone has over 100 such treaties in place. Extradition treaties vary widely, but often include three types of provisions. The offense being charged against the individual must be a crime in both states, the individual may only be tried for the crime used to justify the extradition, and the offense cannot be "political" in nature.

After a failed coup in Turkey in July 2016, the responsible Turkish officers fled to Greece. Though Turkey requested extradition of the perpetrators to return and stand trial, the Supreme Court of Greece denied their request and granted asylum to the Turkish officers.

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Many substantive treaties have also been negotiated dealing with various transnational crimes. Over the last two decades, transnational crime has emerged as a major issue of international relations. As Moisés Naím wrote, "Global criminal activities are transforming the international system, upending the rules, creating new players, and reconfiguring power in international politics and economics."16 Drug trafficking is an important example. Over 20 multilateral treaties and their various protocols have been negotiated at both the bilateral and regional level to deal with the issue. However, a key problem in preventing drug trafficking across state borders is that the production, refinement, and shipment of narcotics contribute substantially to the gross national product of many countries, including those that supply the raw materials for illegal narcotics (like Colombia and Afghanistan) and those that are transit routes for narcotics (like Tajikistan and Guinea-Bissau). Thus, destroying poppy fields in Afghanistan or coca fields in Colombia would be tantamount to destroying the economies of each of these states. Afghanistan, for example, produces an estimated 70 percent of the world's heroin, most of which is consumed in the Russian Federation. The economic value to Tajikistan of heroin

smuggling from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation is equivalent to 30 to 50 percent of its gross domestic product. A similar fate has affected the West African state of Guinea-Bissau, whose offshore islands and miles of coastland have been too costly for the relatively poor country to police adequately. Drug traffickers in Guinea-Bissau, with the complicity of some in the national military, have established a collection and distribution base that may be responsible for the transit of 2,200 pounds of cocaine per night. The existence of international law dealing with the issue does not guarantee compliance.

Another important criminal issue that has garnered attention under international law is terrorism. There is no single treaty that deals with terrorism overall, as states differ in whether or not they consider various types of groups and various types of actions "terrorist." Different terrorist actions are therefore dealt with across several different multilateral treaties, including hijacking, the taking of hostages, terrorist bombings, and the financing of terrorism. The multilateral treaties dealing with these various issues require that these actions be criminalized under national law and that alleged offenders be either extradited or prosecuted in the state's own courts. Many states are parties to these treaties, but not all. Recognizing the central importance of these crimes in the world today, the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly have called on states that are not already parties to these treaties to become parties "as soon as possible."

While it might seem like there should be significant agreement on policing international crime, working together to deal with these issues is often highly politicized. Even an issue as seemingly mundane as extradition has been a source of disagreement and tension between states. In particular, the EU and individual states including Mexico, Italy, Switzerland, and South Africa argue that they will not extradite an individual if the death penalty could be used. Rulings by international institutions and international courts have backed up this argument, citing various international laws. In Soering v. United Kingdom (1989), the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the United Kingdom's extradition of an individual to

face capital murder charges in Virginia would violate obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Similarly, in Judge v. Canada (2003), the UN Human Rights Committee found that Canada violated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by deporting an individual to the United States to face a death sentence.

National courts have even weighed in on this argument. National courts in Mexico, Switzerland, South Africa, and the Netherlands have ruled that assurances that the state requesting extradition would not impose the death penalty were necessary before they would extradite an individual. The Italian Constitutional Court even ruled that extradition was not allowed even if such assurances were given. Italy would not extradite an individual to any country where the death penalty was used.

The United States strongly disputes these arguments, maintaining that the use of the death penalty does not violate international law and that requests made under negotiated extradition treaties should therefore be honored. Whether or not to use the death penalty in the United States is largely up to the individual U.S. states, as most criminal laws are subject to state jurisdiction and punishment. The federal government can apply the death penalty only for limited types of crimes including treason, espionage, and large-scale drug trafficking. So in federal states like the United States, Switzerland, and Canada, another layer of complexity is added when those states seek to comply with international treaties.

The politicization of the issue is an important source of conflict between the United States and others. For example, a special assistant to the prosecutor in Arizona argued of Mexico's extradition requirements, "We find it extremely disturbing that the Mexican government would dictate to us, in Arizona, how we would enforce our laws… . That's an interference of Mexican authorities in our judicial process."17 And Bob Baker, president of the Los Angeles Police Protective League, argued in 2005 that the court rulings requiring assurances that the death penalty would not be used

are an “unwarranted intrusion on the criminal justice system in the United States and an infringement on U.S. sovereignty.”18 Cooperation regarding criminal law—even on an issue as seemingly mundane as extradition—is not as straightforward as it may seem.

Law of the Sea

In the late 1950s through the early 1970s, the United Nations held several conferences in order to codify the law of the sea, which until that time had been governed by customary law. The treaty that resulted is the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which entered into force in 1994 and had 168 parties by 2020. The treaty governs the law of the sea today. It deals with many different issues related to the law of the sea, including the establishment of maritime zones around state borders, as well as functional issues such as fishing and management of mineral resources in the seabed.

The establishment of maritime zones around coastal borders is a key issue in international law. In particular, states have certain rights in the sea depending on how close it is to their coastal borders, and other states have limited rights in those various types of waters. A baseline is drawn on each state’s coast at the low-water line marked in sea charts from which the various maritime zones are defined (see Figure 7.1). This includes the coast of islands. Any waters landward of the baseline such as rivers and lakes are considered a state’s “internal waters,” which are treated just as if they were a state’s territorial land. The coastal state has full sovereignty in these waters, and its criminal and civil laws apply to actions taken within them.

Outward from the baseline up to 12 nautical miles are a state’s territorial waters. A state still has sovereignty over these waters and rights over all the natural resources within the seabed of those waters, but there are some limitations on its actions. A state cannot impede the “innocent passage” of foreign vessels in its territorial waters or levy taxes on vessels engaged in such innocent passage. Foreign vessels not engaged in innocent passage may be excluded from the territorial sea.

FIGURE 7.1

Sea Areas in International Law

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Source: PharmaSea, “Figure 2. Maritime Boundaries in the UNCLOS,” www.vliz.be/projects/marinegeneticresources/united-nations-convention-law-sea.html (accessed 9/8/20).

Within 24 nautical miles of a state’s baseline is the state’s “contiguous zone.” In these waters, the coastal state can punish infringement of its civil and criminal laws committed in its territory or territorial sea and can prevent infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration, or sanitary laws. However, other laws and regulations infringed upon beyond the territorial sea are not subject to the state’s jurisdiction even if committed within the contiguous zone.

States also agreed to allow a coastal state to declare an “exclusive economic zone” within 200 nautical miles of its baseline. Within the exclusive economic zone, the coastal state has full sovereign rights for purposes of exploring, exploiting, conserving, and managing the living things and nonliving things within its waters and seabed. This covers activities like fishing and using natural resources within the seabed. However, foreign vessels have all the other freedoms within the exclusive economic zone that they have on the high seas. The high seas are open to all states for a wide variety of activities, including navigation, fishing, and mining natural resources.

The final main boundary marker is the continental shelf. The legal definition used by UNCLOS refers to the continental shelf as the seabed and soil of the underwater areas extending beyond the state’s territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory. The legal rights of the coastal state in its continental shelf, however, cannot extend beyond 350 nautical miles from the baseline. States have exclusive rights to the resources located within the continental shelf, including mineral and other nonliving resources of the seabed and subsoil as well as sedentary living organisms. These

resources do not include other living organisms within the waters. All waters beyond the exclusive economic zone are considered the high seas. The high seas are open to all states.

These boundaries are of central importance for states because they affect their sovereignty, as well as economic activities such as fishing and mining natural resources. Maritime boundaries are also an important source of conflict in the international system today.

All land territory including islands can generate territorial waters and an exclusive economic zone. Conflict has therefore been rampant over the control of islands in the South China Sea. An important part of the reason why control over these islands is a major source of conflict has to do with the law of the sea. Sovereignty over these islands would create territorial waters and an exclusive economic zone the sovereign state would have in its control. Not only is fishing an important part of the economy of many of the states that claim sovereignty over the islands (fishing rights are governed by the law of the sea), but also the seabed of these islands is believed to have significant amounts of natural resources.

More importantly, the creation of territorial waters around the islands would limit the activities of foreign vessels within them. The United States keeps military vessels in this area that it uses to help maintain control over the Pacific. If China had sovereignty over the islands, these vessels would not be allowed to remain. In an effort to gain control over the waters, China has even begun to construct its own artificial islands in order to further expand its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. Recognizing this, and in defiance of China's claim over the islands, the United States, over a dozen times in 2018 and 2019 alone, sailed navy vessels within 12 nautical miles of the artificial islands China had created. China has accused the United States of making an "illegal incursion" into its waters.

In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration rejected China's argument that it has sovereign rights over the South China Sea islands. The tribunal ruled that China had violated international law by causing "irreparable harm" to the marine

environment, endangering Philippine ships, and interfering with Philippine fishing and oil exploration. The decision is legally binding, but China has claimed it does not recognize the decision as legitimate and will not abide by it. With no international enforcement mechanism to impose the law on China, China continues its actions in the South China Sea. In March 2021, in fact, the Philippines reported incursion into its exclusive economic zone by 287 Chinese fishing boats. The Philippines responded with "sovereignty patrols" of the area. The law of the sea, and the rights it confers to coastal states, plays a key role in international relations today.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESInternational Cooperation: A View from Vietnam

In recent years, Vietnam has played an important role in fostering international cooperation both regionally and internationally despite a history of conflict in the twentieth century. A colony of France since the mid-nineteenth century, French Indochina fell to the Japanese in 1940. When the French tried to reassert control following the Japanese defeat, Vietnam successfully fought for and won its independence in 1954. But conflict continued as the country, which was divided between North and South Vietnam, fought a civil war. The South was supported by the United States, in what the Vietnamese now call the War of American Aggression. North Vietnam claimed victory in 1975 and united the two parts into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It joined the UN in 1977, but for all practical purposes Vietnam was isolated internationally for a decade.

That isolation gradually ended as Vietnam initiated Doi Moi—domestic reforms and opening that allowed greater economic freedom as well as stimulating trade and private foreign investment through a more market-based economy. Part of those reforms included integrating Vietnam into the regional and global communities. In 1995, Vietnam joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a membership that was seen as finally burying the Cold War in Southeast Asia and a sign that regional solidarity would be

promoted. For Vietnam, membership provided credentials as a good regional citizen and encouraged business relationships.

Becoming an ASEAN member was a valuable step in Vietnam's regional and international integration. Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Minh confirmed that membership in ASEAN is "an important pillar in its foreign policy and a framework for cooperation in security and development." Vietnam has been a strong advocate for ASEAN's authoritative role in regional matters, and its leadership in the organization has not gone unnoticed. In 2020, Vietnam held the rotating chair of ASEAN—a membership that Vietnam's leaders say has brought mutual benefits.

Vietnam's effective response to COVID-19 in early 2020 provided another opportunity for leadership. As chair of ASEAN it called for international cooperation to deal with the pandemic in mid-February 2020. Two months later, it organized a special ASEAN + 3 online summit (ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea) where the countries agreed to exchange expertise and medical supplies. Vietnam has provided masks and other medical supplies to ASEAN members as well as to the European Union and United States. Its cooperative actions and its effective control over the pandemic earned it respect and recognition in ASEAN and the international community more broadly.

In 2020–21, Vietnam also held a seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC). As president of the UNSC in early 2020, it hosted two important meetings on observance of the UN Charter and cooperation between the UN and ASEAN. In the January 2020 ministerial debate it chaired, Vietnam emphasized "the importance of observing the UN Charter, international law, and fundamental principles of respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, preventing the use or threat to use force and settling disputes by peaceful means."a

For Vietnam, cooperation with other states and respect for international law are central to fulfilling key national interests that, most importantly, include addressing its tensions with China over competing claims regarding sovereignty of islands

and resources in the South China Sea, a concern shared by other ASEAN members. China has unilaterally blocked Vietnam (and others) from oil and gas exploration in the sea and has worked to divide the states to prevent them from forming a unified bloc. Dealing with the individual states at the bilateral level would give China significantly more leverage in the process of negotiating an agreement to end the dispute.

Vietnam's leadership in ASEAN has challenged these efforts by China. Notably, the 36th ASEAN summit that Vietnam hosted resulted in a statement asserting that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) should be the legal framework to determine maritime entitlements, sovereign rights, jurisdiction, and legitimate interests over maritime zones in the South China Sea. Vietnam's adept leadership and strong posture on the issue is credited with the united front that emerged from the summit and unexpected pushback against China's territorial and maritime claims.

In 2020, Vietnam also worked to present a united front in ASEAN in the negotiation of a code of conduct with China that would govern actions in the South China Sea, and Vietnam insists that UNCLOS remains the basis for the negotiated code of conduct. Many analysts argue that without a forceful country like Vietnam leading ASEAN's side in the negotiations, China would likely be able to impose an agreement on a code of conduct that reflects China's, rather than ASEAN states', interests.

Vietnam has promoted cooperation in East Asia and globally in recent years. Here, Prime Minister Nguy?n Xuân Phúc participates in the East Asia Summit held online in November 2020.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What is the importance of Vietnam's membership in ASEAN?

How has Vietnam's leadership roles in ASEAN and the UN Security Council influenced its approach to international cooperation?

What will the future of cooperation in ASEAN likely be without a state adopting a strong leadership role?

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Maritime Boundaries and Disputed Islands, South China Sea

Source: Lindsey Burrows, “U.S. Offers Vietnam Massive Aid Package to Boost Coast Guard,” The American Interest, December 16, 2013, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/12/16/us-offers-vietnam-massive-aid-package-to-boost-coast-guard/ (accessed 5/20/21).

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Check Your Understanding

What best matches the definition of international law? a body of rules and norms that regulate interactions in the international system

a set of compulsory laws and judgements that states and individuals follow

whatever the hegemon in the international system says it is

a series of rulings from the International Court of Justice

Which of the following can enforce international law according to the logic of vertical enforcement? individuals

multinational corporations

national courts

nongovernmental organizations

Glossary

international law

a body of rules and norms regulating interactions among states, between states and IGOs, and among IGOs, states, and individuals

treaties

are explicitly written agreements among states that lay out rights and obligations (sometimes labeled conventions, covenants, or protocols)

vertical enforcement

a legal process whereby one actor works to constrain the actions of another actor over which it has authority in order to secure its compliance with the law

universal jurisdiction

states may claim jurisdiction over an individual in another state if that individual's conduct is sufficiently heinous to violate the laws of all states

horizontal enforcement

a process whereby states work to elicit compliance with international law by other states

legitimate

being supported logically and justifiably

extradition

the process of delivering an individual from the territory of one state to another state for prosecution or to serve a sentence

Endnotes

Note 12: Karen J. Alter, The New Terrain of International Law: Courts, Politics, Rights (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Return to reference 12

Note 13: Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, "On Compliance," International Organization 47:2 (1993): 175–205. Return to reference 13

Note 14: Thomas M. Franck, The Power of Legitimacy among Nations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Return to reference 14

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Note 17: Barnett Lotstein, quoted in Associated Press, "Escape to Mexico Blocks Death Penalty," USA Today, January 17, 2008. Return to reference 17

Note 18: Bob Baker, "Force Mexico to Extradite," Denver Post, May 18, 2005. Return to reference 18

Note a: S. D. Pradhan, "Dual International Responsibilities of Vietnam in the UNSC and ASEAN: An Assessment," Times of India, July 29, 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/ChanakyaCode/dual-international-responsibilities-of-vietnam-in-the-unsc-and-asean-an-assessment/ (accessed 8/26/20). Return to reference a

IN SUM: THE CENTRALITY OF COOPERATION

International cooperation and international laws designed to solidify that cooperation are of central importance in the world today. Though wars and intense conflicts receive the most attention, cooperation and respect for international law are more prevalent. Treaties are regularly forged on a wide variety of issue areas, ever expanding the volume of international law. Multilateral trade happens every day, and states' treaty obligations in many other issue areas are upheld. Conflict exists, but so does cooperation. Subsequent chapters examine in more detail a variety of substantive issue areas in which we see conflict but also a wide range of cooperation.

Discussion Questions

Choose an issue area in which there is a body of international law. Which type of enforcement mechanism do you think best explains why states largely comply with treaties in this issue area? Why?

Think of an example of noncooperation between states. In this case, why do we not see cooperation? Why have the mechanisms liberal and constructivist theorists argue can help bring about cooperation not worked?

Think of an example of cooperation between states. Why do we see cooperation regarding this issue? Which mechanisms highlighted by liberal and constructivist theories are at work in fostering this cooperation?

Key Terms

economic interdependence (p. 230) extradition (p. 246)

horizontal enforcement (p. 242) international cooperation (p. 222) international law (p. 234) legitimate (p. 245)

prisoner's dilemma (p. 224) shadow of the future (p. 228) transaction costs (p. 230) treaties (p. 236)

universal jurisdiction (p. 242) vertical enforcement (p. 238)

Glossary

economic interdependence

states mutually rely on one another for goods and/or economic gain

extradition

the process of delivering an individual from the territory of one state to another state for prosecution or to serve a sentence

horizontal enforcement

a process whereby states work to elicit compliance with international law by other states

international cooperation

when states adopt behavior that is consistent with the preferences of other states in order to achieve common objectives

international law

a body of rules and norms regulating interactions among states, between states and IGOs, and among IGOs, states, and individuals

legitimate

being supported logically and justifiably

prisoner's dilemma

a theoretical game in which rational players (states or individuals) choose options that lead to outcomes (payoffs) such that all players are worse off than under a different set of choices

shadow of the future

states' expectations about how long they will continue to interact in the future

transaction costs

the costs of making an exchange

treaties

are explicitly written agreements among states that lay out rights and obligations (sometimes labeled conventions, covenants, or protocols)

universal jurisdiction

states may claim jurisdiction over an individual in another state if that individual's conduct is sufficiently heinous to violate the laws of all states

vertical enforcement

a legal process whereby one actor works to constrain the actions of another actor over which it has authority in order to secure its compliance with the law

8

International Political Economy

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Across the world, protesters have demonstrated to highlight the negative effects of economic globalization on local economies despite promises of improvements. However, countries like China remain powerful financiers of the global economy and wield tremendous power over developing countries. How can developing countries improve their local economies while remaining independent from Chinese financing?

In 2020, protesters waving Kyrgyz flags and holding signs that read, “We won’t give Kyrgyz land to China,” demonstrated against Chinese encroachment on Kyrgyz land. A year earlier, Kazakhs, too, protested against Chinese expansion into Kazakhstan, dismayed by the influx of Chinese workers into new factories and power plants and the mounting debt owed to China. In 2017, Malaysia scrapped Chinese rail and pipeline projects, and there were also cancellations in Pakistan and Nepal due to concern over the increasing debt owed to China. These are local reactions to projects spawned by China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Affected by the construction of new infrastructure like dams, highways, and airports, their land confiscated, often with low remuneration, and their livelihoods threatened, people across the region are demonstrating against economic globalization.

A continent away, in 2016, thousands of Argentinian workers and labor union members marched in protest, angered by the loss of 154,000 state and private-sector jobs. In the same year, Peruvian citizens protested against the government’s entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as well as mining companies’ exploitation of indigenous lands. And in Chile, protesters in coastal villages marched in defiance of government-imposed fishing bans, believing those bans were designed to protect salmon exporters. Each of these protests was spurred by the perception that economic globalization has led to job loss and exploitation by big business and hegemonic states. Despite the promises of economic liberalism, these protesters as well as many in developing countries have not been lifted out of poverty and their standard of living has not improved.

Three decades earlier, Thomas Friedman expressed an optimistic assessment of globalization. As he defined it in The Lexus and the Olive Tree, globalization is the “inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world further, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before.”1 The expectation was that economic liberalism and new technologies were stimulating not only the increasing flow of capital and trade but also the decreasing territorialization of

economic life, at both global and regional levels. But over the years, that optimism sobered. “Is globalization no longer a good thing?” The Economist asked in 2016.2 And in 2019 Foreign Policy published a symposium based on the essay by Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman “What Economists (Including Me) Got Wrong about Globalization.”3 Not only has there been a slowdown in economic globalization in terms of foreign investment and trade, but there is deep questioning about the process given the crises of the twenty-first century.

How does the international economy work, and who does it work for? Why is economic globalization so controversial? And why in the last decade, in light of several major economic crises, have we seen a reaction against globalization generally and economic liberalism specifically?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand the core concepts of economic liberalism.

Describe how the views of mercantilists/economic nationalists and radicals differ from those of economic liberals.

Analyze the roles the major economic institutions play in the international political economy.

Explain how the international economic system has become globalized in key areas: international finance, international monetary policy, international trade, and international development.

Analyze the origins of the global economic crises in the twenty-first century.

Explain how critics of international economic liberalism and economic globalization reflect differences in the contending perspectives on the international political economy.

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Endnotes

Note 01: Thomas L. Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization (New York: Farrar, Straus, and

Giroux, 1999), p. 257. Return to reference 1

Note 02: “Special Report, The World Economy,” The Economist, October 1, 2016, 3–16. Return to reference 2

Note 03: Michael Hirsh, “The Big Think: Economists on the Run,” Foreign Policy 231 (Winter 2019). Return to reference 3

THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY: IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS

The era from the late Middle Ages through the end of the eighteenth century saw a number of key changes in technology, ideas, and practices that altered the international economy. Spurred by advances in ship design and navigation systems, European explorers opened up new frontiers in the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East to trade and commerce. Although Greek, Phoenician, and Mesopotamian traders had preceded them, the British East India Company, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Dutch East India Company facilitated trade in goods and enslaved people; provided capital for investments in the agricultural development of the new lands; and transported cotton, tobacco, and sugar to Europe. Settlers increasingly moved to these lands, linked to the motherland by economics, politics, and culture, forming a nascent transnational class pursuing individual economic interests.

Writing during this time was the eighteenth-century British economist Adam Smith. As we noted in Chapter 2, Smith began with the notion that human beings act in rational ways to maximize their self-interest. When individuals act rationally, markets develop to produce, distribute, and consume goods. When there are many buyers and sellers, market competition ensures that prices will be as low as possible and consumer welfare enhanced. Thus, in maximizing economic welfare and stimulating individual (and therefore collective) economic growth, markets epitomize economic efficiency. Those markets need to be virtually free from government interference; only through a free flow of commerce will efficient allocation of resources occur. That is the rationale underpinning the theory of economic liberalism.

Yet the policies of many European governments at the time reflected an alternative view, mercantilism. The goal of a mercantilist government was to build economic wealth as an instrument of state power. Drawing on the views of the Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–83), an adviser to Louis XIV, the mercantilist view held that states needed to accumulate gold and silver to guarantee power. A strong central government was needed for efficient tax collection and maximization of exports, both geared toward guaranteeing military prowess. Such governments encouraged exports over imports and industrialization over agriculture, protected domestic production against competition from imports, and intervened in trade to promote employment. In line with these ideas, the United States' first secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), advocated protectionism—policies designed to restrict imports from other countries. Such policies limit the competition domestic industries face from foreign producers, and using protectionist policies, he argued, would protect the growth of the new nation's manufacturers. In his "Report on Manufactures" to Congress in 1791, he supported high tariffs and encouraged investment in inventions. Mercantilist policies thus included protectionist measures and discouraged foreign investment in the name of achieving national self-sufficiency.

Economic nationalism, which has seen a resurgence in the twenty-first century, reflects a modern version of these core mercantilist ideas. Economic nationalists view the international system as a competition for power among states. In this competition, economic policies should be subservient to the national interest—the state's quest for power relative to other states. A state should practice interventionism (rather than relying on market mechanisms) in order to strengthen its economy. Reducing imports and investment from other countries can help achieve these goals. For economic nationalists, trade is a zero-sum game where the goal is to gain as much as possible for one's own state rather than creating mutual gains. Economic nationalism pushes for the achievement of national objectives over collective, global interests.

These changing economic ideas were reflected in the international system. From the beginning of the nineteenth century through World War I, the expansion of colonialism and the Industrial Revolution occurred as the result of major technological improvements in communications, transportation, and manufacturing processes. The European states needed the raw materials found in the colonies, so international trade expanded, as did international investment; capital moved from Europe to the Americas as investors searched for higher profits. Britain was the center of the Industrial Revolution, the major trading state and source of international capital. It was also a political and cultural hegemon, contested only by France. Britain facilitated trade by lowering its own tariffs and opening its markets, policing the sea to provide safer transit, and encouraging investment abroad.

The harsh living conditions of the working class during nineteenth-century industrialization and imperialist expansion gave rise to another perspective—economic radicalism—drawing on the body of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and dependency theorists' writings. Cognizant of the economic chasm between the developed and the developing worlds during the twentieth century, economic radicals blamed the capitalist system under liberalism for these problems. Although interpretations vary, the core belief found in the radical tradition is based on an economic argument that society basically is conflictual (see also Chapter 3). Conflict emerges from the competition among economic groups of individuals—namely, the owners of wealth and the workers—for scarce resources. The state tends to support the owners of the means of production. Finally, the owners of capital are determined to expand and accumulate resources at the expense of the working class and those in the developing world. As Marx himself argued, the constant expansion of capitalist markets leads to crises; dangerous speculation by those holders of capital only exacerbates these crises.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Contending Perspectives on the International Political Economy

Economic Liberalism

Mercantilism/ Economic Nationalism

Economic Radicalism

View of Human Nature

Individuals act in rational ways to maximize their self-interest

Humans are aggressive; conflictual tendencies

Naturally cooperative as individuals; conflictual in groups

Relationship among Individuals, Society, State, Market

When individuals act rationally, markets are created to produce, distribute, and consume goods; markets function best when free of government interference

Goal is to increase state power, achieved by regulating economic life; economics is subordinate to state interests

Competition occurs among groups, particularly between owners of wealth and laborers; group relations are conflictual and exploitative

Relationship between Domestic and International Society

International wealth is maximized with free exchange of goods and services; on the basis of comparative advantage, international economy gains

International economy is conflictual; insecurity of anarchy breeds competition; state defends itself

Conflictual relationships because of inherent expansion of capitalism; seeks radical change in international economic system

These schools of thought came to a head during the worldwide depression of the 1930s (the Great Depression) which saw a major decline in trade and investment, made worse by "beggar thy neighbor" policies—policies designed to solve a state's own economic problems at the expense of others. To protect themselves from the effects of the economic crisis by increasing domestic employment, states used policies such as the imposition of high tariffs and currency devaluation

(reducing the price of your currency to make your exports more competitive in other countries and imports from those countries more expensive in your own). But these policies tended to worsen the economic problems of neighboring countries, reducing their employment. Seeking to prevent the use of these types of policies in the future, the Western victors at the end of World War II sought to promote openness of trade and stimulate international capital flows while establishing a stable exchange-rate system. States, multinational corporations (MNCs), and the institutions of the Bretton Woods system are to play a major role in the economy of the twenty-first century.

Economic Institutions

The Role of States

States exercise key roles in influencing domestic and international economic policy. States have available two major macroeconomic policies: fiscal and monetary policies. Fiscal policies affect a government's budget, including the level of government spending and the tax rates. To stimulate the economy, the government may choose to increase government spending and/or decrease tax rates. To slow the economy down or balance the budget, states may select to cut government spending or increase tax rates. Monetary policies include increasing or decreasing the money supply, generally through manipulation of short-term interest rates. Such policies influence broad conditions in the economy, including employment and inflation rates. Finally, states select microeconomic policies—policies on regulation, subsidies, competition, and antitrust actions. In all cases, governments undertake a balancing act—too much of one instrument can have consequences in other areas and can also have unintended consequences.

In a globalized world, a state's actions do not occur in a vacuum; what one state decides affects other states. The price of money depends on exchange rates, the price of one currency in relation to another. That rate facilitates the exchange of goods and services and has an immediate impact on the price of a country's goods and assets. Under floating exchange rates,

the market—individuals and governments buying and selling currencies—determines the actual value of one currency compared with other currencies. Under a fixed exchange rate, a government keeps its money at an established value, in terms of gold or another currency. Sometimes central banks intervene to manage the value of the exchange rate. Some states have adopted a common currency and use the currency of another state or a group of states. A weaker domestic currency stimulates exports and makes imports more expensive, whereas a stronger domestic currency curtails exports, making imports cheaper.

International trade is a key economic driver in a globalized world. States make a variety of decisions affecting the amount and level of trade, depending on the amount of protection they desire from the effects of the international market. Among the key trade policies are the level of tariffs—the taxes on goods and services crossing borders—and the kind of nontariff barriers—the restrictions on international trade designed to protect health, safety, or national security. Such policies may be used to protect the domestic economy, the consumer, new industries, and even national security. For example, Japan and South Korea impose tariffs on American beef, justifying the action in terms of protecting its population from disease. This has the effect, intended or not, of bolstering their own domestic beef producers.

Because of the interconnectedness of the world economy, a state's economic policy decisions affect the economies of other states. Economists have developed methods to measure these relationships. Current accounts measure the net border flows between countries of goods, services, governmental transfers, and income on capital investments. Capital accounts measure the flows of capital between countries, including foreign direct investment and portfolio investment in and out. Together, those two measures compose the balance of payments—a country's current and capital account balances. The balance of payments is either positive (in surplus) or negative (in deficit). In a surplus balance of payments, like in the German economy, the value of exported goods, services, and investment income is greater than the value of imported goods, services, and

investment income. In contrast, many developing countries have a balance of payments deficit: the value of their imported goods, services, and investment income exceeds the value of their exported goods, services, and investment income. The United States carries both current accounts and balance-of-payments deficits.

In economic liberalism, markets are the major determinant of a state's policy, with states providing market rules and a level playing field. Other actors, namely multinational corporations and international governmental organizations, also play key roles. Adherents of economic nationalism and economic radicals have a different view of these actors.

The Role of Multinational Corporations

MNCs, defined in Chapter 3 as corporations that span state borders, either through their actual presence in several countries or through investment in and trade with other corporations within them, are not new institutions. They have a long history, with forerunners in the British East India Company, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Before World War II, most MNCs were in manufacturing—like General Motors, Ford, Siemens, Nestlé, and Bayer, among others. Since the 1990s, there has been not only an expansion of the number and complexity of MNCs but also an increase in their size. Today, there are about 60,000 MNCs, depending on one's precise definition. They account for 50 percent of worldwide trade and constitute up to 40 percent of the value of the stock markets in the West. Just 10 percent of these MNCs generate 80 percent of all global profits, and they own the lion's share of intellectual property. In 2020, of the largest 500 corporations, one-third were based in one of five major cities—Beijing, Tokyo, Paris, New York, and London. China is the home of 124 of the largest MNCs, up from 3 in 1995, while the United States is the home base for 121 of the largest companies. Large MNCs include such well-known names as Apple, Walmart, ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Toyota, and General Motors, but also less well-known companies, like Sinopec, HSBC Holdings, Carrefour, Royal Bank of Scotland, Gazprom, and Tesco. Since the global economic crisis of

2008, however, there has been some diminution in the power of MNCs. Sales of Western firms outside their home country have declined and MNC profits are falling, in part due to the fluctuations in commodity prices and in the variable profits of oil companies.4

MNCs take many different forms and engage in many different activities, such as investing in foreign countries, importing and exporting goods and services, negotiating licenses in foreign markets, and opening facilities abroad. Whatever form their business takes, MNCs participate in international markets for a variety of reasons. They seek to avoid tariff and import barriers, as many U.S. firms did in the 1960s when they established manufacturing facilities in Europe. They may seek to reduce transportation costs by moving facilities closer to consumer markets. Some MNCs are able to obtain incentives such as tax advantages or labor concessions from host governments; these incentives can cut production costs and increase profitability. Others go abroad so they can meet the competition and the customers, capitalize on cheaper labor markets (e.g., Chinese firms may move production to Vietnam or Laos), or obtain the services of foreign technical personnel (e.g., computer firms may relocate to India). These reasons are based in economics, but also on the political policies of the host state. MNCs may move abroad to circumvent tough governmental regulations at home, such as banking rules, currency restrictions, or environmental regulations. In the process, MNCs become not only economic organizations but also political ones, potentially influencing the policies of both home and host governments.

Multinational corporations play a key role as engines of economic growth, providing international finance and items to trade. In liberal economics, MNCs are the vanguard of the international order. They are, in the words of Robert Gilpin, the “embodiment par excellence of the liberal ideal of an interdependent world economy… . For the first time in history, production, marketing, and investment are being organized on a global scale rather than in terms of isolated national economies.”5 To supporters of economic liberalism, MNCs are a positive development: economic growth happens through

the most efficient mechanism. MNCs invest in capital stock worldwide, they move money to the most efficient markets, and they finance projects that industrialize and improve agricultural output. MNCs are the transmission belt for capital, ideas, and economic growth. MNCs prefer to act independently of states; the market itself will regulate behavior. Any MNC abuses can be best corrected by other market actors, or at worst by government regulation.

Economic nationalists view MNCs as instruments of the state, whose power needs to be harnessed in the national interest. They suggest imposing national controls on MNCs, including denying market entry to some of them, taxing profits, and imposing currency controls. While the ways states choose to manage MNCs vary, their goal is the same: to harness the economic power of MNCs for state purposes.

Economic radicals, especially those in the dependency tradition, see MNCs as controlled by dominant states and their interests. Hence, developing states where MNCs operate will always be in an unfavorable position. Sometimes the elites in the dependent country work in collaboration with the MNCs. The end result will be underdevelopment in the dependent state.

The Role of Economic Institutions

At the end of World War II, policy makers established one set of intergovernmental organizations to support economic liberalism. The so-called Bretton Woods institutions—the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and, to a lesser extent, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), now the World Trade Organization (WTO)—have all played, and continue to play, key roles in the expansion of economic liberalism (see Figure 8.1). But each is under severe pressures.

Backed by U.S. hegemonic leadership, the Bretton Woods institutions—the World Bank, the IMF, and the GATT system—led to postwar recovery and economic prosperity. For 20 years after the end of World War II, economic growth occurred much as liberal economic theory had predicted. Growth rates in the developed and the developing world averaged more than

4 percent. Trade volume increased over sevenfold, and poverty rates fell dramatically worldwide. And the volume of international finance exploded, as the communication revolution expanded the possibilities for international financial transactions. The groundwork of economic globalization had been laid. But beginning in the 1990s, the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions have been criticized and alternative institutions established.

The World Bank was initially designed to facilitate reconstruction in post–World War II Europe, hence its formal name: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. During the 1950s, the World Bank shifted its primary emphasis from reconstruction to development. It now generates capital funds from member-state contributions and from borrowing in international financial markets. As with any bank, its purpose is to loan these funds, with interest, for economic-development projects. By jumpstarting development, its lending is designed not to replace private capital but to stimulate additional investments by private capital. For example, a high proportion of the World Bank's funding has been used for infrastructure projects—hydroelectric dams, basic transportation needs such as bridges and highways, and agribusiness ventures. But the bank also funds governments and the private sector to carry out a wide array of economic-development activities, including those in the social sector.

FIGURE 8.1

The Bretton Woods Institutions

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Although the World Bank has about $65 billion annually at its disposal, by 2020 the bank no longer enjoyed the prominence it once had. Cross-border financing is now commonplace through many other instruments, including MNCs, bilateral lending, and alternative multilateral instruments. Among those smaller and more nimble alternatives are two multilateral development banks, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), both strongly funded by China.

Proposed in 2006 and operational in 2015, the AIIB has 45 regional members and 37 nonregional members including Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany, but not the United States and Japan. The bank supports projects in emerging-country markets, including partners in China's Belt and Road Initiative. Loans are designed to stimulate long-term growth through massive investment in diverse infrastructure related to energy, transportation, and water. The target is to lend $1.2 billion annually. By 2020 almost $20 billion in loans had been approved. The bank established a Crisis Recovery Facility to assist states responding to the economic downturn from COVID-19.

The NDB was founded in 2015 by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, referred to as the BRICS. The NDB grants equal voting power to each member. Its purpose is to support public and private projects through loans, guarantees, and equity participation in BRICS member states. While it has much smaller capitalization than the AIIB, it supports a number of projects, including sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy.

Are these two institutions rivals to the World Bank, which is dominated by the United States, and the regional multilateral development banks like the Asian Development Bank dominated by Japan? Or are they partner institutions? In terms of resources available, they are not effective rivals. The AIIB's capital is one-half of that of the World Bank, for example. While there is some cooperation among the institutions, it is clear that these new institutions are designed to serve China's economic and geopolitical objectives and stimulate cooperation among the BRICS. Both are headquartered in China, and China is the major financial contributor, though it has no veto power.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was designed to provide stability in exchange rates. Originally, the fund established a system of fixed exchange rates, with the United States guaranteeing currency convertibility. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the United States guaranteed the stability of this system by fixing the value of the dollar against gold at $35 an ounce. In 1972, however, this system collapsed when the

United States announced that it would no longer guarantee a system of fixed exchange rates. This decision led to a revision of the IMF in 1976 when it formalized the system of floating exchange rates, relying on market forces to define currency prices. At that time, monetary cooperation became the responsibility of the Group of 7 (G7), composed of the United States, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Canada. The IMF was to provide short-term loans for member states confronting temporary balance-of-payments deficits. But, as it became increasingly apparent, "temporary" difficulties were rarely temporary. States needed to undertake structural changes, and the IMF expanded its functions to include policy advice on macroeconomic issues and economic restructuring.

The governance of both the IMF and the World Bank—where the major donors are guaranteed voting power commensurate with their contributions—has long been contested. The largest shareholders in each institution—the United States, the European Union states, Japan, and Canada—hold about 60 percent of the total votes. Reformists believe a more representative voting structure might lead to a fairer system and one that promotes different policies. While incremental changes have been made, China's share is 6.1 percent, significantly less than the United States' 16.5 percent and the EU's 29.6 percent. Fundamental voting power has not shifted.

Both the IMF and the World Bank policies have been criticized by liberal economists and economic radicals. Economic liberals accuse the two institutions of straying too far from their liberal economic foundations, taking on too many different tasks (e.g., trying to promote an environmental agenda or gender equality) and deviating from actions promoting market liberalization. In contrast, radical political economists claim the institutions promote the interests of private international capital, pointing to the economic returns for firms that provide services for dams and power plants. Other bank policies that have been rigidly developed without considering local conditions and local knowledge end up disproportionately affecting the disadvantaged sectors of the population: the unskilled, women, and the weak. These are

also similar to arguments of economic nationalists who support making spending priorities and projects solely the responsibility of states.

The third part of the liberal economic order was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This treaty enshrined important liberal principles:

support of trade liberalization, because trade is the engine for growth and economic development

the most-favored-nation (MFN) principle—nondiscrimination in trade whereby states agree to give the same treatment to all other GATT members as they give to their best (most-favored) trading partner

preferential access in developed markets to products from the less developed countries to stimulate economic development

support for "national treatment" of foreign enterprises—that is, treating them in the same way that domestic firms are treated

The GATT established these trade principles as well as procedures for moving toward free trade. Multilateral negotiations among countries sharing major interests in an issue (major producers and consumers of a product, for example) were hammered out and then expanded to all GATT participants. Individual states could claim exemptions (called safeguards) to accommodate any domestic or balance-of-payments difficulties that might result from existing trade agreements.

In 1995, the GATT became a formal institution, renaming itself the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO incorporated the general areas of the GATT's jurisdiction and expanded jurisdiction in services and intellectual property. Regular ministerial meetings gave the WTO a political prominence that the GATT lacked. Representing states that conduct over 90 percent of the world's trade, the WTO serves as a forum for trade negotiations and provides a venue for trade review, dispute settlement, and enforcement.

Two important procedures were initiated in the WTO. First is the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM), which conducts periodic surveillance of the trade practices of member states. States can question one another about trade practices. Second is the Dispute Settlement Body, designed as an authoritative panel to hear and settle trade disputes. With the power to authorize affected states to sanction violators (for example, by raising tariffs on certain goods), this body is more powerful than earlier GATT arrangements. Under the WTO, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) protects intellectual property such as patents, trademarks, creative material, and software. States may take measures to enforce compliance when violations occur. MNCs and many states in the Global North support using TRIPS to force noncompliant states to pass and enforce laws for intellectual property protection.

Ensuring global participation in the WTO has been a painstaking process. China's accession to the WTO in 2001, after 15 years of negotiations, illustrates the issues at stake. China, classified as a developing country at the time, got "special and differentiated treatment." It gained access to the American market under most-favored-nation status. China, in turn, agreed to gradually liberalize its capital markets, permitting foreign banks, credit companies, and foreign telecom companies entry to the Chinese market. China also agreed to enforce rules concerning intellectual property, establishing a system of courts to enforce intellectual property rights and prosecuting an increasing number of offenders. Chinese tariffs did decrease significantly between 1992 and 2002 following WTO accession. But other reforms lagged, particularly those related to the liberalization of capital markets. Many of the rules were so strict that foreign companies were unable to gain access. China has become an active user of the dispute-settlement process, being involved in 65 disputes through 2019, even though it has lost a majority of the cases. Like China, other countries joining the WTO like Vietnam, Russia, and Kazakhstan had to undertake significant reforms. In all of these cases, disentangling the government from the economy has proven to be a difficult task.

The World Trade Organization has also become a lightning rod for criticism from many countries. The United States for one is increasingly dissatisfied with the WTO process and China in particular. As a developing country, China is permitted to impose tariffs on imported goods, an average of 27 percent, while the United States imposes an average tariff of 9 percent.6 As the world's second-largest economy and the biggest producer of cars and steel, China has a clearly outdated developing country designation. The expectation had been that tariffs would be lowered over time but that has not happened across the board. The United States is also dissatisfied with the dispute-settlement system even though it has prevailed in 91 percent of cases. The Trump administration, in particular, argued that the court exercises judicial overreach, creating too many new obligations that undermine U.S. sovereignty. Hence, the United States refused to participate in the recruitment of new judges for the Dispute Settlement Body, leading to the suspension of the dispute-settlement process at the end of 2019 and the hamstringing of the entire WTO. Thus far, the WTO has been essentially left out of the trade renegotiations between the United States and China while the two have engaged in a tit-for-tat trade war, as discussed in Chapter 5.

With the understanding that the United States' participation is essential to any international trading organization, commentators in 2020 referred to the WTO as a "hobbled" organization in a "wretched" state, "bleeding" in a global trade system "besieged."7 In reality, the WTO is relatively weak. Its resources are stretched thin, constrained by its limit of just over 600 employees. However, by ending the deadlock over naming a new Director-General of the WTO and supporting Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Biden administration has demonstrated a renewed American interest in the WTO's future. Major reforms to fix the critical dispute-settlement process, rewrite the rules on e-commerce and digital trade, and address China's position in the WTO remain on the agenda. In 2021, the WTO became central to the discussions over patent protections for COVID-19 vaccines. Under TRIPS, patent protections can be waived for health emergencies.

More generally, for many, the WTO has become a symbol of economic globalization, usurping local decisions and degrading the welfare of individuals. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are some of the major critics of WTO activities. Some of them oppose the WTO's power to make regulations and settle disputes in high-handed ways that intrude on or jeopardize national sovereignty. Still others fear that promotion of unregulated free trade undermines the application of labor and environmental standards, and they believe that the WTO sets economic liberalization above other social values.

The majority of academics and policy makers in the Western world are supporters of economic liberalism and the institutions described above that support that view. They believe that internationalization of finance and free unfettered trade are positive, leading to greater economic welfare for all. Order, they say, is achieved by international market competition. Economic nationalists, the old mercantilists, are not so sure. Historically, their goal has been the accrual of individual state power; economic gain by one results in a diminution of power in others. Hence, finance, trade, and investment are all arenas in the struggle for national power. Order is achieved when there is a balance of power or when there is a clear dominant power or a hegemon. There is little role for the international institutions. Economic radicals see internationalization as leading to domination by a few and thus to underdevelopment and exploitation of the poorer classes and states. They see that capitalism has resulted in overconcentration of economic resources in a few rich states, and that the domination of finance has led to increasing crises in the international political economy. For economic radicals, some of the international institutions actually perpetuate the power of the rich over the poor states.

So which theory best explains the international political economy? To answer this question, we first examine how the international economy functions in the twenty-first century in the areas of international finance, international monetary policy, international trade, and international development. Then we turn to the major challenges in the contemporary

political economy—the persistence of crises and the uncertain future of economic globalization.

Check Your Understanding

Most policymakers in charge of international economic institutions, as well as most leaders of Western nations and academics, come from which economic perspective?
mercantilism

economic radicalism

economic liberalism

economic nationalism

Which of the following is not a Bretton Woods institution?
GATT/World Trade Organization

European Union

World Bank

International Monetary Fund

Glossary

economic liberalism

ideas based on Adam Smith that when individuals pursue their own self-interest, efficiency for everyone is achieved; markets function best when governments interfere the least

mercantilism

economic theory that international commerce should increase a state's wealth, especially gold; state power is enhanced by a favorable balance of trade

protectionism

state policies imposing barriers to restrict imports for a variety of reasons

economic nationalism

modern version of core mercantilist ideas that economic policies should be subservient to the national interest

economic radicalism

beliefs drawn from Marxist and neo-Marxist writing that poor labor conditions, colonial expansion, and divisions between the rich and poor are blamed on international capitalism

macroeconomic policies

government policies designed to address macroeconomic conditions, including fiscal and monetary policies

fiscal policies

policies affecting a government's budget, namely level of government spending and tax rates

monetary policy

policies affecting national interest rates or exchange rates designed to affect employment and inflation rates

microeconomic policies

government policies adopted to affect regulations, subsidies, competitiveness, and antitrust actions

exchange rates

the price of one currency in relation to another; rates may float with the market or be fixed by governments

tariffs

tax imposed on imports which raises the price of the good, designed to protect domestic producers from competition by foreign producers

nontariff barriers

restrictions on international trade other than tariffs, including quantitative restrictions and quotas; designed to protect health, safety, national security, or competitiveness

current accounts

measure of net border flows between countries of goods, services, governmental transfers, and capital investments

capital accounts

measure of the flows of capital between countries, including foreign direct investment and portfolio investment in and out

balance of payments

a country's current and capital account balances; may be positive (surplus) or negative (deficit)

World Bank

a global lending agency focused on financing projects in developing countries; formally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, established as one of the key Bretton Woods institutions to deal with reconstruction and development after World War II

BRICS

an informal group of emerging economic powers, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

the Bretton Woods institution originally charged with helping states deal with temporary balance-of-payments problems; now plays a broader role in assisting debtor developing states by offering loans to those who institute specific policies or structural adjustment programs

Group of 7 (G7)

group of the traditional economic powers (U.S., Great Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, Canada) who meet annually to address economic problems; when Russia joins, the G8 discussions turn to political issues

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

founded by treaty in 1947 as the Bretton Woods institution responsible for negotiating a liberal international trade regime that included the principles of nondiscrimination in trade and most-favored-nation status; reformed as the World Trade Organization in 1995

most-favored-nation (MFN) principle

principle in international trade agreements when one state promises to give another state the same treatment in trade as the first state gives to its most-favored trading partner

World Trade Organization (WTO)

intergovernmental organization designed to support the principles of liberal free trade; includes enforcement measures and dispute settlement mechanisms; established in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Endnotes

Note 04: See “The Retreat of the Global Company,” The Economist, January 28, 2017, 18–22; “The Rise of the Superstars,” The Economist, September 17, 2016, 3–16; and “Global 500,” Fortune, 2020. Return to reference 4

Note 05: Robert Gilpin, “Three Models of the Future,” International Organization 29:1 (Winter 1975): 39. Return to reference 5

Note 06: Data on tariffs reported in Keith Bradsher and Karl Russell, “Building Trade Walls,” New York Times, March 7, 2017, B6. Return to reference 6

Note 07: “The WTO’s Outgoing Boss Leaves Behind a Hobbled Body,” The Economist (Weekly Edition), August 30, 2020. See also Dmitry Grozoubinski, “The World Trade Organization: An Optimistic Pre-Mortem in Hopes of Resurrection,” Lowy Institute, August 6, 2020. Return to reference 7

HOW THE GLOBALIZED ECONOMY WORKS TODAY

International Finance

Capital movements played a key role in earlier phases of the international political economy, as they do today. International capital traditionally moves through international private finance, including MNCs, other private companies, pension funds, investors, and other nongovernmental sources. This occurs through foreign direct investment (FDI)—construction of factories and investment in the facilities for extraction of natural resources by MNCs—and through portfolio investment—investment in another country’s stocks or bonds, either short or long term, without taking direct control of those investments. International capital also moves through currency manipulations (discussed below).

Indeed, between the 1960s and the 1980s, private international capital provided essential lending to the successful Asian "tigers," including Taiwan and South Korea. In fact, the infusion of private investment in emerging economies—China, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, South Korea, Mexico, Singapore, Turkey, and Thailand—has played a major role in their economic success. Yet the volatility of private capital flows makes them unreliable for sustained development in some parts of the world, and private capital alone cannot explain economic outcomes in these countries.

The poorest states have more difficulty attracting private investment. Until recently, African countries typically have received the least. Separate institutions within the World Bank were established to provide capital to states that were unable to attract private investment alone. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Development Association (IDA) were created in 1956 and 1960, respectively, for that purpose. The IFC provides loans to promote the growth of private enterprises in developing countries. The IDA provides capital to the poorest countries, usually in the form of interest-free loans. Repayment schedules of 50 years theoretically allow the developing countries time to reach economic takeoff and sustain growth. Funds for the IDA need to be continually replenished by major donor countries. In 1988, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) was added to the World Bank group. This agency meets its goal of augmenting the flow of capital to developing countries by insuring investments against losses. Such losses may result from expropriation, government currency restrictions, or civil war or ethnic conflict. Even with these changes, since the mid-1980s, the flows from both multilateral institutions (the World Bank institutions, regional development banks) and official bilateral donors (the United States, Germany, Japan) have declined as a percentage of total capital flows; at the same time, private capital flows from MNCs and other private sources have expanded.

The scale of activity in international private finance is massive. Each day roughly $4.5 trillion crosses international borders, including $110 billion in the form of loans and $150

billion in the form of portfolio investments, and between $50 and $100 billion in purely speculative currency exchanges. Tens of thousands of financial institutions are involved in these transactions.

Beginning in the 1980s, international financial flows accelerated through several other mechanisms. New economic actors, sovereign wealth funds—state-controlled investment funds composed of financial assets, including stocks, bonds, precious metal, property, or other financial instruments—formed in capital-surplus countries such as China and in the major petroleum exporters such as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Norway, Russia, and Canada. Those wealth funds have been able to move capital quickly across national boundaries, taking advantage of currency differentials and buying and selling new financial instruments to maximize long-term economic return. Such investments are designed to cushion states that have relied on a declining natural resource. Markets also developed new financial instruments, such as derivatives, whereby investors bet on the future prices of package asset classes, including loans and mortgages. Such instruments are packaged and sold around the world, spreading risk and accelerating the flow of capital. Finally, economic liberalism has led to the emergence of offshore financial centers, such as the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and the British Virgin Islands. These jurisdictions have low taxation and little or no regulation. Capital can move in and out rapidly via electronic transfers.

The Asian financial crisis of the 1990s illustrates the possible outcomes of the globalization of finance. Beginning in Thailand in 1997, fearing that the government was no longer credible in its commitments, investors left Thailand, resulting in a loss of 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Within weeks, the crisis spread to Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, then to South Korea and Taiwan, and eventually to Brazil and Russia. Many countries were unable to adjust to the rapid withdrawal of capital. Exchange rates plummeted to 50 percent of pre-crisis values, stock markets fell 80 percent, and real GDP dropped 4 to 8 percent. Individuals lost their jobs as companies went bankrupt or were forced to restructure.

Millions of people in economies that had depended on external trade were forced into poverty. Fueled by instantaneous communication, the capacity to move trillions of dollars daily, and the power of MNCs and financial entrepreneurs, economic globalization quickly displayed its pitfalls. The market had melted down, and states and individuals appeared helpless.

The IMF responded to the social and political upheaval with large, controversial bailout packages to three of the affected countries (Thailand, $17 billion; Indonesia, $36 billion; and South Korea, $58 billion). To transform their economies to more market-oriented ones, the IMF imposed lengthy sets of conditions and compliance requirements. In South Korea, for example, the government lifted restrictions on capital movements and foreign ownership. Budget cuts eliminated more social services and pushed more families below the poverty line, leading to a backlash against governments and the IMF. Solutions that the international financial institutions implemented in one country proved counterproductive in others, and marginalized groups suffered. Dissatisfaction with IMF policies led many in developing countries to conclude that these institutions were captive to the interests of the developed world.

Yet following two years of economic stress and the wounded credibility of the IMF, none of the countries involved retreated from globalization or the international financial markets, and all resumed a path of strong economic growth. States did change their behavior, and that had positive consequences.

International Monetary Policy

Like goods and services, national currencies are generally bought and sold in a free market system. The prices of each currency adjust continually in response to market supply and demand. But the system has not always operated this way. Historically, gold was the linchpin of the world currency system. During the 1920s the value of the U.S. dollar was linked to gold, and after World War II the U.S. dollar returned to the gold standard, although since it was the only currency to do so, other countries attempted to “peg” their currencies to (or establish their currencies’ value in relation to) the U.S.

dollar. The dollar-gold standard helped consolidate the role of the United States as the world's creditor and the manager of the international financial system, but in 1971 the U.S. dollar was taken off the gold standard. With currencies allowed to rise and fall with fluctuations in the major economies, traders in currency exchange markets and in MNCs could capitalize on buying and selling currencies. Such currency transactions averaged more than $3 trillion a day. These fluctuations can be a source of international finance.

There is no global institution addressing monetary policy—despite its name, the IMF has relatively limited powers. There are three interrelated components of the "managed" international monetary system: reserve currencies, central banks, and international banks. The United States plays a key role in each.

The fact that the U.S. dollar serves as the world reserve currency gives the United States enormous power. Approximately 60 percent of the world's output and its people reside within the de facto dollar area, where currencies are pegged to the dollar and adjust to it. More than 60 percent of foreign-exchange reserves held by banks are in U.S. dollars; 80 percent of all foreign-exchange market transactions involve the dollar, including all transactions in the petroleum markets. More than 40 percent of international trade is indexed in the dollar. America's Wall Street sets the global rhythm and the U.S. Federal Reserve facilitates the dollar payment system worldwide. This gives the United States political power: it can run external deficits, as it is insulated from pressures applied by foreign powers holding the debt; it can push favorable regulatory policies; and it can target states and individuals with financial sanctions, hindering their capacity to use the international banking system as it has against Iran, Russia, and North Korea. For all these reasons, U.S. hegemony in the international monetary system is as strong as ever.8

After the 2008–2009 international financial crisis when the systemic risk of relying on one currency was realized, other contenders for the dollar's role have emerged. China wants its currency to play a greater role. While China holds about 30 percent of global foreign-exchange reserves, its currency, the

renminbi or yuan, still represents less than 2 percent of cross-border payments and 1.4 percent of total foreign reserves. In 2016, the IMF added the Chinese currency to the basket of currencies that make up the special drawing rights, the reserve asset in which the IMF denominates loans. These currencies include the U.S. dollar, the British pound, the Japanese yen, and the euro. The IMF decision was largely symbolic—a recognition that China had become a world economic power. China has taken a number of steps to try to increase the internationalization of its currency, but there is opposition from Chinese exporters who fear that currency appreciation would make their exports less competitive in foreign markets. Whether the renminbi will become an internationally important reserve currency depends, then, on domestic reforms in China—on China's ability to open up financial markets while still maintaining its "socialism with Chinese characteristics."9

Many economists argue that although the international monetary system has major flaws, there does not appear to be a successor system. "The global monetary system is unreformed, unstable and possibly unsustainable," The Economist reports. "What it needs is an engineer to design smart ways to tame capital flows, a policeman to stop beggar-thy-neighbor policies, a nurse to provide a safety net if things go wrong, and a judge to run the global payments system impartially. If America's political system makes it hard to fill those vacancies, can China do better?"10

International Trade

Economic growth is fueled by both financial and trade flows. Since states differ in their factors of production—land, labor, and capital worldwide wealth is maximized if states engage in international trade. International trade is a win-win situation, according to economic liberals.

The British economist David Ricardo (1772–1823) developed a theory that states should engage in international trade according to their comparative advantage. Because each state differs in its ability to produce specific products—because of differences in natural resource bases, labor force

characteristics, and land values—each state should produce and export that which it can produce most efficiently and import goods that other states can produce more efficiently. Thus, states maximize gains from trade. However, individual actors can be hurt in this process, necessitating periodic government intervention to ensure that all people gain.

Consider the production of cars and trucks in the United States and Canada. The United States can produce both cars and trucks using fewer workers than Canada would use, making production less expensive in the United States. Under the principle of absolute advantage, the United States would manufacture both cars and trucks, and then export both to Canada. However, under comparative advantage, each country should specialize; the United States should produce the car, for which it has a relative advantage in production, and Canada, the truck. By trading cars for trucks, each country gains by specialization. Each state minimizes its opportunity cost, the benefit given up to achieve another goal. The United States gives up the production of trucks to gain car production; Canada gives up the production of cars to gain more truck production. Each country gains by shifting resources to manufacture more of the commodity it produces more efficiently and by trading for the other commodity. Both countries can consume more than they would have if they had remained in isolation, consuming only what they produced domestically. Liberal economics posits that under comparative advantage, production is oriented toward an international market. Efficiency in production is increased, and worldwide wealth is maximized.

Although China used to thrive on its ability to provide cheap labor to foreign countries, it has begun to outsource its cheap labor elsewhere. Ethiopia has become a popular destination for Chinese companies to set up factories, as pictured here.

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Two economists in the 1920s clarified comparative advantage. The Heckscher-Ohlin theory posits that countries will export goods that use the most intensive endowments of the state. A land-rich state will export agricultural products, while a state

with an abundance of low-skill labor will export products that use this labor. Furthermore, states will import products that use factors of production (land, labor, or capital) that are scarce. This explains why the United States is a major agricultural and high-tech product exporter while it is an importer of clothing from labor-abundant states like Bangladesh and India.

While international trade based on comparative advantage may result in economic growth of the collectivity, individual states also have other policy objectives. Both liberal economists and economic nationalists may want to maintain domestic employment levels and minimize unemployment as well as enforce their own domestic labor and environmental standards. They may want to help subsidize emerging sectors or protect other sectors vital for national security. Therefore, negotiations over trading arrangements must consider not only the anticipated economic gains from opening up the economy to competition from others, but also the costs of achieving the other objectives. It's no wonder trade negotiations have been so contentious.

International Trade Negotiations

Between 1947 and 1994, the parties in the GATT were successful in cutting tariffs, giving better treatment to the developing countries, and addressing new problems (subsidies and countervailing duties). Overall, tariffs were reduced in the major trading countries from an average of 40 percent to 5 percent on imported goods.

In 1986, the Uruguay Round began, covering new items such as telecommunications, financial services, insurance, intellectual property rights (copyrights, patents, trademarks), and, for the first time, agriculture, previously seen as too contentious an issue. In late 1994, the most comprehensive trade agreement in history was finally reached, a 400-page document covering everything from paper clips to computer chips. Tariffs on manufactured goods were cut by an average of 37 percent among members. The developing countries that participated in these tariff cuts—the liberalizers—enjoyed a full percentage point per year boost in growth compared with the nonliberalizers.11

With the WTO replacing the GATT, the Doha Development Round, launched in 2001, ended in a stalemate in 2016 with agribusiness lobbies in the United States and the EU unable to reach a compromise with India, Brazil, and China on the liberalization of agricultural markets. While a trade-facilitation agreement to streamline customs procedures and upgrade border and port infrastructure was signed, the Doha Round was essentially dead.

Negotiating agreements among 164 countries at varying levels of development and with diverse national objectives is a challenge. The WTO has proved to be a weak institution for facilitating that process, given the procedure adopted by negotiators: "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." Most emblematic of WTO weakness was its inability to respond to the positions adopted by the Trump administration's circumvention of WTO obligations. Whether other members respond by reforming the organization and whether the United States will use the organization and strengthen its support for its principles remain open questions.

The Regionalization of Trade and Beyond

Despite the efforts of the World Trade Organization and multinational corporations to support internationalization of the economy, regionalization has seen a resurgence, especially in trade. In 1994, there were 47 bilateral free-trade agreements; in 2016, there were over 200 such agreements. The United States, the EU, China, and Japan, as well as South Korea, Chile, Mexico, and Singapore, have all negotiated multiple bilateral agreements, many with political and strategic objectives in mind. More regional economic arrangements have been negotiated as well, from roughly 50 in 1990 to more than 300 in 2020. Some of those agreements are being strengthened, while others have been weakened or replaced. No regional economic agreement has been as strong, or as copied, as the European Union.

Economic Integration in the European Union

European economic integration was predicated on the notion that a larger market, along with the free movement of goods and services, would permit (1) economies of scale (producing

more goods for a larger market would lower the cost of production per unit) and (2) specialization to stimulate growth, competition, and innovation. Both goals are compatible with economic liberalism. The European Union (EU) has generally proven successful in achieving some of these objectives, creating a single market and developing a monetary union, though both remain a work in progress.

The impetus for expanded European economic integration lay in part in Europe's sluggish economy in the 1970s and 1980s, a time when the United States and Japan were increasingly competitive. To stimulate Europe's growth, and hence its international competitiveness, the Single European Act of 1987 accelerated the integration process, setting the goal of achieving a single market by 1992. That effort involved removing physical, fiscal, and technical barriers to trade and harmonizing national standards by adopting more than 300 community directives. Some parts of the goal—such as the elimination of customs barriers—were quickly achieved; other areas—such as labor mobility—have proved more problematic. Although most countries eliminated passport controls and adopted similar visa rules, recognition of education and professional qualifications has proven a thorny issue. Abolishing technical barriers to trade has been difficult because of differing health and safety standards, but the process is ongoing, as is the effort to break state monopolies and eliminate state aid to specific sectors.

The overall results have been positive, with the growth of all types of economic transactions across state borders deepening integration among the national economies of the 27 member states. Exports of goods and services constitute more than one-third of the GDP for the average EU member. More than 70 percent of total trade in goods is conducted with other EU members. Not only is trade integrated, but so are capital flows. Cross-border mergers and acquisitions have accelerated. The broad consensus is that European integration has resulted in greater trade creation and has had a positive welfare effect on member and nonmember states.

The EU is more than a regional trading area or a single market. During the discussions for the single market, the outlines of a

monetary union were also negotiated. With monetary stability and a single currency, the union would grow and prosper even more. The European Monetary Union, set forth in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, called for the establishment of a single currency, the euro; it became the unit of exchange for businesses in 1998 and for consumers in 2002. The manager of the euro is the European Central Bank. It sets the interest rates for banks lending in the Eurozone and controls the euro's money supply. The individual 17 members of the Eurozone can therefore no longer use monetary policy like exchange rates or interest rates as instruments of economic policy. Most observers agree that the euro has facilitated business transactions and eliminated the uncertainty caused by fluctuations in exchange rates. But the euro has come under unprecedented pressure since 2009.

Very early, the European Union recognized that agriculture was different from other economic sectors. Agricultural supplies, and hence prices, dramatically fluctuate with weather and disease. Foodstuffs are viewed as vital for national security; in emergencies, no state wants its population to depend on others for food. And in many countries, the well-organized farm sector enjoys disproportionate political power. For all these reasons, the EU adopted the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP has changed over time, moving gradually away from a production-oriented policy in which the EU purchases surplus crops from farmers at guaranteed prices to a Single Payment Scheme, wherein agricultural support was decoupled from production in order to prevent overproduction and allow farmers to produce according to market demands. The Basic Payment Scheme replaced the Single Payment Scheme in 2015, requiring farmers to be paid annually (provided they conform to certain environmental practices) based on their entitlements derived from their land. Public intervention by the EU is now limited to wheat, butter, rice, beef and veal, and certain types of milk. Large farmers are being phased out of the program, and rural development is being promoted. The CAP's total budget was 40 percent of the EU budget in 2019, down from 73 percent in 1985. The CAP has proved to be one of the most controversial EU policies. States desiring membership want a fair share of

funds; beneficiaries like Poland, Greece, and Romania want to retain their subsidies, while other states worry about the high prices for EU agricultural products.

Many question whether the EU's policies contributed to economic globalization or proved an impediment. Most economists agree that the policies of the EU have been beneficial. The EU has played a critical role in raising the standards of production, in such areas as food safety, data privacy, and environmental protection. Being the world's second largest market, admission to that market is predicated on following EU standards, and such standardization has lowered the costs for producers and consumers alike.12 EU policies have become increasingly compatible with the goals of the multilateral global system. Indeed, the EU has developed a web of preferential agreements with its neighbors in the Mediterranean area, with former colonies in Africa, and with North America and Latin America. In general, the EU has enhanced Europe's global economic power, making Europe more competitive with both the United States and China. But crises like the global financial crisis, the euro crisis of 2008–2009, and the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 discussed later in this chapter, as well as Britain's exit from the European Union finalized in 2020 and discussed in Chapter 9, have led many commentators to ponder the long-term prognosis for the EU.

North American Trade Agreements: Canada, the United States, and Mexico

Both the free-trade area negotiated by the United States, Canada, and Mexico in 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the 2020 renegotiated and renamed U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) differ substantially from the European Union and other regional schemes. Mexico's and Canada's combined economic strength is one-tenth that of the United States. The driving force was business interests seeking larger market shares than their Japanese and European competition, as well as free-trade advocates in all countries. The subsequent phasing out of many restrictions on foreign investment and most tariff and nontariff barriers allowed MNCs to shift production to low-

wage labor centers in Mexico and to gain economically by creating bigger companies through mergers and acquisitions. Neither agreement was intended to lead to the free movement of labor. The goal is quite the opposite; the United States expected that Mexican workers would not seek employment in the United States, because economic development in Mexico would provide employment opportunities. And in neither case was economic cooperation designed to lead to political integration.

Under NAFTA, trade expanded among the three partners and most tariffs were eliminated. Cross-border supply chains made the participating MNCs more competitive and profitable. Agricultural markets became better integrated, and virtually all agricultural tariffs were eliminated. Both Canada and Mexico became large markets for U.S. agricultural exports. Similarly, the share of Canadian exports absorbed by the United States expanded, and agricultural exports from Mexico boomed. Tariffs on manufactured goods were also almost entirely eliminated. Foreign direct investment among the three countries increased tenfold. Most analysts find that the agreement had a positive impact on U.S. GDP, adding 0.35 percent to its economy.

However, like all trade agreements, NAFTA produced both winners and losers. Labor unions in the United States estimated that over 600,000 workers lost their jobs to Mexico, though there are several other explanations, including gains in labor productivity. Environmental groups pointed to firms in the United States that have relocated to Mexico to take advantage of weak environmental regulations. And while the United States posted a trade surplus with Mexico in 1993 of $1.7 billion, 20 years later there was a $63.2 billion deficit.

Canada and Mexico also had NAFTA supporters and critics. While Canada had a threefold surge in cross-border investment and is a leading importer of U.S. agricultural products, Canadian labor believed that the country was becoming too dependent on natural resource exports. Mexican supporters pointed to some major increases in jobs, including a fourfold increase in the number of Mexican autoworkers. Foreign investment in Mexico increased from $4.4 billion in 1993

before NAFTA to about $22 billion annually. But critics pointed to negative outcomes: the slide in real manufacturing wages due to the movement of lower-skilled jobs to China; the failure to develop “backward linkages” in its main export sectors (growth in one sector leading to growth in the industries that supply them); and the relative stagnation of Mexican wages with poverty remaining at about the same level as in 1994. To radical economists, NAFTA was yet another example of U.S. expansionism and of the exploitation of the Mexican workforce by, on the one hand, the United States and Canada and by, on the other hand, the Mexican government, whose redistribution policies failed to raise the standard of living for all.13

Calling NAFTA the “worst trade deal,” President Trump began renegotiations for a new agreement in 2017 and the USMCA entered into force in 2020. While much of USMCA mirrors NAFTA, there were changes in five areas. First and most critically, automobile manufacturers were required to include 75 percent of their parts from a USMCA country to avoid having tariffs imposed, up from 62.5 percent under NAFTA. And more parts were to be made by workers earning at least $16 hour—provisions designed to boost auto production in the United States. Second, Mexican labor laws were strengthened and a monitoring system put in place. Third, U.S. dairy farmers were given greater access to Canadian markets. Fourth, provisions were included dealing with digital products, a subject that was not part of NAFTA. Finally, an environmental protection fund of $600 million was established to address cross-border environmental problems. Like in any international trade negotiation, different sectors had different interests. What began as an economic issue quickly became a political one.

Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance

Among the many subregional trade agreements made in the 1990s was the Common Market of the South (Mercado Común del Sur) or Mercosur founded in 1991 by Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, with Venezuela joining in 2012. It is the fifth largest economic bloc.14 The countries agreed to eliminate customs duties on trade among themselves,

implement a common external tariff of 35 percent on certain imports from outside the bloc, and adopt a common trade policy toward outside countries and blocs. With these grand ambitions, Mercosur was not merely an economic response to the creation of NAFTA and the EU's single market, which its members feared would cost them markets and influence. It was also an attempt to reverse decades of authoritarianism, crises, and antagonism, especially between Argentina and Brazil. Under Mercosur, trade increased among its members five times over during the 1990s. However, trade over the last 20 years has fallen compared to trade with nonmember states.

Progress has been blocked by disagreement on the level of the common external tariff, by economic crises in both Brazil and Argentina, by individual countries falling back on protectionist policies, and by Venezuela's erratic government. In August 2017, Venezuela was suspended from membership because of President Nicolás Maduro's antidemocratic measures, like imprisoning opposition leaders and circumventing the elected parliament. In 2019, Mercosur reached a historic agreement with the European Union, calling for the elimination of tariffs on roughly 90 percent of Mercosur's exports to the EU, the opening up of government procurement to companies from both blocs, and the establishment of more stable rules for trade and investment. However, in 2021, the EU judged the text on labor and the environment as too weak, requiring Mercosur members to commit to addressing climate change and deforestation before the agreement with the EU becomes effective.

The Pacific Alliance, with Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru as members, represents Latin America's second-largest trade group. Coming into effect in 2016, the Pacific Alliance aims not only to promote trade and investment linkages among its members but also to serve as a platform for economic and commercial integration between Latin America and Asia-Pacific. The hope is that these countries can increase participation in regional and global value chains (in which various stages of the production process span countries), many of which are based in Asia-Pacific. With Mercosur's relationship with the EU and the Pacific Alliance reaching out

to Asia-Pacific, both are in the process of becoming transregional economic arrangements.

Transregional Economic Arrangements

Interest in transregional economic arrangements has grown. In 2015, an agreement among the United States, Japan, and ten Pacific Rim countries (including Canada, Chile, and Mexico) for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was concluded. The agreement, touted as a global trendsetter for commerce and a way to strengthen alliances in the region, included a phasing out of import tariffs, a strengthening of macroeconomic cooperation, and an enhancement of labor, environmental, and copyright/trademark protection. President Obama saw the pact as a means to ensure that "the United States—and not countries like China—is the one writing this century's rules for the world's economy."15 But President Trump halted America's participation in the agreement, labeling it a "horrible deal."

The Mercosur Summit in 2019 resulted in an important agreement between the EU and the Latin American bloc, but Venezuela, notably, was missing from the negotiation after being removed from the organization in 2017. Here, Latin American leaders including Uruguayan president Tabaré Vázquez, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, Argentinian president Mauricio Macri, and Paraguayan president Mario Abdo Benítez, among others, gather in Argentina.

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In 2018, 11 states under the leadership of Japan, Australia, and New Zealand signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), keeping most of the original provisions of the TPP. It became the first regional agreement to include rules on digital commerce, including consumer privacy protections. It also went further in committing members to improve workplace conditions and strengthen environmental protections. Removed from CPTPP was a key provision supported by the United States: an extension of the length of time for copyright protection and automatic patent extensions. The Biden administration has indicated willingness to rejoin CPTPP but only if stronger

labor and environmental provisions are renegotiated. Rapid policy reversals are unlikely as multilateral trade negotiations, even renegotiations, are a lengthy process.

The Debate over Bilateral, Regional, and Transregional Trade Agreements

The proliferation of all types of trade agreements is controversial. Three questions regarding economic regionalization have emerged. First, do regional trade agreements actually improve the economic welfare of their members through trade creation, or is trade actually diverted to nonmember states and economic welfare reduced? With regional trade agreements, trade internal to the bloc is created in goods produced efficiently relative to the rest of the world. And recent research suggests that regional pacts stimulate trade with third parties as well.

Second, does economic regionalization enhance the position of labor and improve environmental arrangements? Or does economic regionalization force a downward pressure on wages and environmental standards as countries and regions actively compete for trade and foreign direct investment? The answers to these questions are of particular importance to developing countries.

Third, are regional trade agreements a stepping-stone or a stumbling block to global trade arrangements? On the one hand, they clearly reduce the number of actors in international negotiations and enhance competitiveness of some domestic industries. On the other hand, under regional trade agreements, larger economies can impose their will and interest groups may find it easier to lobby for their interests. Regional agreements may also make states less likely to agree to global tariff cuts. In recent years, the answer seems to be that bilateral and regional agreements are not becoming a stepping-stone to global trade arrangements but rather an approach used when global negotiations have broken down.

International Development

The end of colonialization following the end of World War II and through the mid-1960s led not only to geopolitical

competition between the United States and the Soviet Union but also to the emergence of newly independent states that were poor and lacking the material resources and expertise to deliver economic goods to their citizens. Very quickly, international programs developed to begin to meet the needs of these states, including the World Bank's affiliates—the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association. The GATT itself adopted the idea of more favorable treatment for developing countries. The Doha Round of the GATT was even labeled a "development" round, although, as one cynic put it, the round "has not filled any bellies."16

Despite these efforts, countries in the Global North (the most developed countries, mainly in Europe and North America) bask in relative wealth, with high consumption habits, high levels of education and health services, and social-welfare safety nets. In contrast, countries in the Global South (lower-income countries, mostly located in Latin American, Asia, and Africa) struggle to meet basic needs, with poor educational and health services and no welfare nets. The Human Development Index (HDI) in Table 8.1 shows these stark contrasts across several indicators. Caused by many factors—colonialism, earlier industrialization of Europe, geography, poor government policies, unaccountable governments—this is the development gap, or for the poorest, the development trap.17 In actuality, both the divisions between the poor and the rich states as well as differences among the rich states and among the poor states themselves have become increasingly apparent. One of the contested issues is how best to achieve economic development.

Strategies to Achieve Economic Development

Most of the debates over the best approach to promote development have focused on variations or adaptations of the liberal economic model, but there are fundamental critiques of these approaches. As constructivists assert, there is a real conflict over ideas and those ideas keep changing.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the development institutions, including the World Bank and major donors such as the United

States, adopted a strategy for development that emphasized financially large infrastructure projects—such as dams, electric power, and telecommunications—as necessary for providing the foundations of development. In the 1970s, realizing that not all groups were benefiting from such investments, the aid agencies began to fund projects in health, education, and housing, designed to improve the economic life of the poor. The 1980s saw a shift toward reliance on private-sector participation to meet the task of restructuring economies and reconstructing states torn apart by ethnic conflict. When areas of the economy are privatized, the government's fiscal burden is reduced, and state spending in education and health can then increase. This approach to economic growth became known as the Washington Consensus, a version of economic liberalism. Its adherents hold that only with certain economic policies—including privatization, liberalization of trade and foreign direct investment, government deregulation in favor of open competition, and broad tax reform—will development occur. The Bretton Woods institutions have been the leaders in advocating these policies.

Although the IMF was not originally charged with development, its bureaucrats realized very quickly that many countries' seemingly temporary balance-of-payments problems were actually long-term structural problems that prevented those countries from developing, and the IMF's short-term loans could not address these problems. Thus, during the early 1980s, the IMF began to provide longer-term loans conditional on states adopting structural adjustment programs consistent with the Washington Consensus. If a state adopted these policies—economic reforms (limiting money and credit growth, forcing currency devaluation, reforming the financial sector, introducing user fees), trade liberalization reforms (removing tariffs), government reforms (privatizing public enterprises), and private-sector policies (ending government monopolies)—then the IMF gave its stamp of approval, leading other multilateral lenders and bilateral and international private banks to lend as well.

TABLE 8.1

Human Development Index, 2019

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEARS)

MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING (YEARS)

EXPECTED YEARS OF SCHOOLING (YEARS)

GROSS NATIONAL INCOME PER CAPITA (PPP$)a

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX VALUEb

Arab States

71.9

7.1

12.0

15,721

0.703

East Asia and the Pacific

75.3

7.9

13.4

14,611

0.741

Europe and Central Asia

74.2

10.2

14.6

15,498

0.779

Latin America and the Caribbean

75.4

8.6

14.5

13,857

0.759

South Asia

69.7

6.5

11.8

6,794

0.642

Sub-Saharan Africa

61.2

5.9

10.0

3,443

0.541

World

72.6

8.4

12.7

15,745

0.731

a. PPP is purchasing power parity. It is a way to compare levels of economic data cross-nationally, free of price and exchange-data distortions.

b. The HDI combines indicators for life expectancy, educational attainment, and income into a composite value, ranging between 0 (low development) and 1 (high development).

Source: United Nations Human Development Report, 2019.

During the 1990s, however, it became apparent that even under structural adjustment, some countries could not get out from under the weight of their debt and begin to develop. That debt had been escalating; developing countries owed $2.2 trillion in 2000 (20 years earlier, the debt had been $577 billion). With mounting pressure to adopt a more systematic approach to debt, the IMF, the World Bank, and the G7 economic powers adopted the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Never before had foreign national debt been cancelled or substantially rescheduled when accompanied by plans for poverty-reduction programs. While implementation of the plan has been slow, by 2019, 36 out of 39 countries had received debt relief, 28 of them in Africa, amounting to over $76 billion in debt relief. That program is now closed to new recipients.

Another change occurred in the international financial institutions beginning in 2009. The institutions discontinued structural performance criteria for loans, even for loans to low-income countries, in response to both the critics of structural adjustment requirements and the 2008 global financial crisis. The loans are tailored according to the respective state's needs, a direct response to criticism of the "cookie-cutter" approach of structural adjustment lending. Monitoring of the loans is done more quietly to reduce the stigma of conditionality. And the IMF urges lending to programs that encourage social safety nets for the most vulnerable within the populations. Ideas that were previously unacceptable to the IMF—that

capital flows may need regulation and that states might take a proactive role in coordinating economic development—became more acceptable in response to the market failures of the global financial crisis.18

In the 1990s, sustainable development, an approach to economic development that incorporates concern for renewable resources and the environment, became part of the World Bank's rhetoric. A broad consensus has emerged on the notion that scarce natural resources cannot be exploited as in the past; sustainability means that growth can be ensured for future generations. There must also be more emphasis on human development, particularly in the areas of education and health. In addition, the targets of development—the people—should have a say in how funds are allocated. And there is much more attention being paid to the political dimension of development: that strong economic and political institutions are needed to protect private property, foster competition, and ensure the rule of law to prevent corruption. In short, the current thinking is that institutions play a more critical role in successful development than the liberal economic model suggests.19 And different types of organizations all have a role to play.

Involving NGOs in development was one approach for improving the accountability and effectiveness of both multilateral and bilateral donor programs. NGOs such as Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, and Doctors Without Borders have distributed seeds, drilled wells, delivered food and medical assistance during emergencies, and helped to plan local-level projects that they hope will bring economic development. The evidence suggests, however, that NGO funding has gone much more to short-term humanitarian aid, in which the demand for funds is immediate, rather than focusing on long-term development.

NGOs could also be an alternative channel for finance to individuals and small groups that are often neglected by the national or international banks. One well-publicized effort, now duplicated many times over, has been microfinance. Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, created in 1983 by an academic-turned-banker, Muhammad Yunus (2006 recipient of

the Nobel Peace Prize), provides small amounts of funding for individuals and groups to invest in an economically productive enterprise. The Grameen Foundation supports such loans worldwide, including to American citizens, the only developed country included. Using a variety of funds, microloans, savings accounts, and other financial services, programs have been incubated in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Ethiopia, among others. More than 90 percent of the foundation's clients are women.

Microfinance institutions have grown exponentially, becoming bigger, more competitive, and more diverse. Some are not-for-profit, such as the Grameen Bank, while others are for-profit institutions; some offer just credit, while, increasingly, others offer a variety of saving alternatives. But do microfinance institutions lift individuals out of poverty? Do they foster economic development and growth more generally?

Studies show a mixed result from microfinance's efforts to alleviate poverty. One study finds that microfinance had no overall impact on the borrower's household welfare after 18 months, measured by income, spending, or school attendance. However, when the borrower already owned a small business, then the new credit infusion improved income and spending. In other words, microcredit helps those who are already better off.20 Another study of six randomized evaluations of programs across four continents finds some evidence that expanded credit increased business activity but did not result in a statistically significant increase in total household income. Microcredit is thus not a panacea.21 But microcredit does offer clients freedom in how the funds are used, even though it does not transform their lives.

Another approach receiving widespread attention in the development community is the use of direct cash transfers to the poor. This strategy has been adopted in a number of countries, including Mexico, which ties the cash transfers to school attendance, and Brazil. Smaller, more targeted programs are being implemented in both Kenya and Uganda, among other states. Systematic cross-national studies of such programs suggest that providing cash ranging from $350 to $500 produces positive results in lifting the very poorest out of

poverty and is less costly than alternative programs. Recipients not only gain income but also are able to expand their productive assets. Food consumption improves, as does psychological well-being.22 This approach, long shunned by liberal economists for miring individuals in dependency, is now applauded for empowering individuals to make decisions to better their own lives.

Remittances—money sent by foreign workers to individuals in a home country—compete with international aid as one of the largest sources of financial inflow to developing countries. In 2019, remittances reached a record of $554 billion. In 2020, remittances dropped to $508 billion due to COVID-19, a 7 percent decrease, though still surpassing foreign direct investment and foreign aid as the key source of income from abroad. While India and China are the largest recipients of remittances, the Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Bangladesh also benefit. For some countries, like Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Moldova, and El Salvador, those remittances represent more than 30 percent of their GDP. While most remittances flow through established institutions like Western Union and MoneyGram, an increasing amount is channeled in informal ways—mobile phones and the Internet—making it harder to verify the exact amounts.

Economists debate the benefits of remittances. There is no doubt that individual recipients benefit; they use the funds to augment their income, pay for services once unaffordable, and, in some cases, invest in a small enterprise. But research has not confirmed that remittances make a major contribution to the economic growth of a country. Instead, the added income is often used to pay for young people to emigrate, making the country even more reliant on exporting labor. Or the money is spent on real estate and land, driving up prices and making life unaffordable for others, which in turn promotes emigration. Remittances fluctuate with the state of the economy in developed countries, making them an unreliable source of capital in the long term. And in the short term they let the developing country government “off the hook” for improving the economic conditions of families.23

Is Development Being Achieved?

Has development actually occurred? In general, proponents of economic liberalism point to success in closing the development gap. Beginning in the 1990s, growth in emerging markets increased, followed (after 2000) by an acceleration in the developing world. Average per-capita incomes in both emerging markets and developing economies have grown. But which development strategy has been most effective? Scholars are increasingly using small-scale randomized experiments based on the pioneering approach of Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, recipients of the 2019 Nobel Prize.24 With that approach they can analyze how different strategies have actually affected people's lives.

The UN has undertaken the tasks of setting and monitoring a broad set of development goals that emphasize not just GNI per capita but also other indicators of human development, like education and health. In 2001, the UN-sponsored Millennium Summit set forth eight goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals were designed to reduce poverty by 2015 and promote sustainable human development in direct response to globalization. Each substantive goal (e.g., poverty reduction, better education, improved health, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships) had specific targets, time frames, and performance indicators. The goals clearly helped direct aid flows to the poorer countries in targeted sectors like health and education.

Substantial progress toward achieving these goals was made, according to a 2015 UN report.25 For example, extreme poverty, defined at that time as living on less than $1.25 a day, declined to 14 percent of the developing world's population from 50 percent in 1990; the absolute number of people living in poverty declined from 1.9 billion in 2001 to 836 million in 2015. Primary school enrollment reached 91 percent in the developing regions. Under-five mortality rates declined by more than half. The maternal mortality ratio declined by 45 percent worldwide; globally, 147 countries met the drinking water target, 95 countries the sanitation target, and 77 countries both. Official development assistance from the developed countries was $135.2 billion per year, an increase of

66 percent since 2000. But, as one critic points out, there are methodological problems with attributing these advancements to the MDGs: “Progress toward the Goals is not the same as progress because of the Goals.”26

In 2015, the UN General Assembly passed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 after widespread consultation with businesses, civil society, citizens, and UN agencies. More ambitious and broad-ranging than the MDGs, the SDGs highlight the connections between poverty, gender equity, and environmental sustainability. They include 17 goals such as ending poverty and hunger, ensuring healthy lives in safe and inclusive cities, and developing reliable and sustainable modern energy supplies. An estimated $90 to $120 trillion is needed for those goals to be achieved—through partnerships among governments, the private sector, and NGOs, rather than through traditional foreign aid. Skeptics are legitimately concerned that these goals are too encompassing and unwieldy and that success will be impossible to measure. Others are concerned that the costs outweigh the benefits, arguing greater benefits can be achieved through trade liberalization and targeting vulnerable populations.27 Five years after the SDGs were set, COVID-19 spawned an economic crisis that clearly has disrupted the implementation of the SDGs, as discussed below.

Detractors of economic liberalism, including many economic radicals and some working within the development community, see that more radical approaches are needed. These ideas include more stringent regulation of MNCs, improved means of delivering technology to poorer countries, better terms of trade through commodity pricing, more debt relief, and radical restructuring of international financial institutions. Only debt relief and modest restructuring of the financial institutions have actually occurred.

Meanwhile, those advocating more of an economic nationalist approach point to the East Asian countries of South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. These states supported key industries through subsidies to enhance their international competitiveness. Through internationally strong industries, these countries have accrued economic wealth. China’s rapid

growth has led to a similar model, an alternative to economic liberalism, labeled the Beijing Consensus. While there is no precise definition of the Beijing Consensus itself, its proponents advocate experimenting with policies that are compatible with a state's political structure and cultural experience—in other words, doing what works. This may include using capitalist tools—the stock market, professional managers, and private companies—as well as employing state-owned enterprises to invest capital in the country's own markets and abroad. This approach was viewed quite favorably because China continued to have high growth rates—as much as 9.5 percent annually—and had apparent success in weathering the global financial crisis and the 2020 pandemic-induced economic lockdown. In the emerging markets of China, Russia, and Brazil, 80 percent, 62 percent, and 38 percent, respectively, of the value of the stock market is held by state enterprises. As The Economist reports, "The invisible hand of the market is giving way to the visible, and often authoritarian, hand of state capitalism."28 And that model has found resonance in Africa, where China's public and private investment has provided needed capital without the strings of conditionality. But China's rapidly increasing debt load, its oversold real estate market, and its unregulated banking have led critics to question the sustainability of that model.

Both states and international organizations seem to be taking a more pragmatic approach to development; they are less constrained by the requirements of the economic liberal model and more accepting of economic nationalist approaches. But whatever economic development strategy they attempt, states are confronted by the persistent challenges of global crises.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESDevelopment: A View from Rwanda

In 1994, Rwanda, located in central East Africa, experienced a genocide in which 750,000 people (almost one eighth of its population) were killed. Rwandan leaders do not want that genocide to define the country. The mostly rural country is

landlocked, with over 12 million people densely living on a gently rolling landscape. It has no natural resources, and 70 percent of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture.

In 2000, with the democratic election of Paul Kagame as president and the launch of Vision 2020, the country adopted a new development objective—to make it a middle-income country by 2020—and a strategy—to graduate from a low-income agricultural country to a knowledge-based, service-oriented country. To achieve this goal, Rwanda used its foreign aid and government funds to make strategic investments in people and infrastructure. It expanded its domestic tax base and imposed an 18 percent value-added tax (VAT), increased foreign investment, and expanded exports. Between 2001 and 2015, GDP growth increased 8 percent annually. Poverty was reduced to 38 percent, and both child and maternal mortality dropped. However, by 2020, Rwanda was still considered a low developing country as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI); the goal was not achieved. But what was achieved is described by the IMF as a miracle.a

In carrying out Vision 2020, Rwanda found diversifying and increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector a high priority. Investments increased in tea and coffee production—higher-value products that Rwanda can export for profit. Exports of flowers, avocados, and mangos were marketed in the East African region. Since 70 percent of the workforce is still employed in agriculture, that sector is critical.

Although the industrial sector was not given high priority, Rwanda has made significant investments in its domestic fashion industry. And it became one of the first countries in Africa to impose high tariffs on imports of secondhand clothing and boosted manufacturing of its textiles. “Made in Rwanda” became an important motto.

The service sector was given the highest priority, with the goal of making Rwanda the African hub for information and communications technology. Since 2012, Rwanda has devoted 5 percent of its spending to the development of science and technology, a high percentage compared to most countries. Fiber optics follow the road network connecting 95 percent of

the population to high-speed cellular networks. And public investments in electricity, water, and roads are designed to promote that sector.

In Vision 2020, major investments were made in the health sector. Ninety percent of the population is now covered by a near-universal health-care system, financed by tax revenues and premiums scaled by income. Life expectancy increased and mortality rates dropped. By the end of 2015, most of the health-related Millennium Development Goals had been met.

In 2020, when COVID-19 appeared, the government took decisive steps to control its spread. The country mobilized new technologies to prevent infection from spreading using robots and geographic information systems to monitor COVID-19 cases at the household level. And it was one of the first African states to vaccinate, thanks to a donation by an anonymous international partner. Despite these successes, Rwanda's economy has felt the economic impact: tourism collapsed and foreign investment dried up. The government established an Economic Recovery Fund, bolstered by the IMF's Rapid Credit Facility, to save small businesses connected to tourism and support the agricultural sector where prices for export crops dropped.

International aid provided needed capital in the early stages of development, but Rwanda made sure that aid focused on its own priorities including gender inclusion. While aid is important, President Kagame affirmed: "Trade and investment, and not aid, are pillars of development." Rwanda would not rely on aid forever. To this end, Rwanda has supported a number of policies. To stimulate manufacturing exports, the government created Special Economic Zones to provide reliable access to energy, water, sewage, and transport linkages for both domestic and international investors, as well as tax incentives, to stimulate exports. Rwanda has worked to reduce tariff barriers, simplifying and reducing tariffs for capital and intermediate goods with the expectation that such reductions will lower the price of inputs used by exporters to increase production. Laws have been changed to make it relatively easy to set up and run a business enterprise, and programs have

been implemented to improve government accountability and curb corruption.

Together, these policies have helped Rwanda achieve a “miracle” improvement in its level of development. The next, more ambitious goal is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and move to a middle-high income status by the year 2050.

”Made in Rwanda” has become an important refrain in the country’s efforts to create a thriving economy by imposing tariffs on many imported goods.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What factors best explain the relative success of the Rwandan approach to development?

How could COVID-19 make Rwanda’s goals more difficult to achieve?

Leadership matters. Explain with reference to Rwanda.

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Check Your Understanding

The Washington Consensus is an approach to development that reflects which of the following economic theories? economic liberalism

radicalism

mercantilism

economic realism

What best describes the state of development funding in use today? Development is based around the Washington Consensus, and IMF loans come with structural adjustment programs.

Development loans primarily target large infrastructure projects.

Development loans no longer exist.

Development loans are tailored to meet the needs of each individual state, with more attention paid to human development.

Glossary

foreign direct investment (FDI)

investing in a state, usually by multinational corporations, by establishing a manufacturing facility or financing investments in extractive industries or transportation

portfolio investment

private investment in another state by purchasing stocks or bonds, without taking direct control of the investments

sovereign wealth funds

state-controlled investment companies that manage large foreign exchange reserves in capital surplus countries like China or in petroleum-exporting countries (Norway, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia)

derivatives

financial instruments often derived from an asset (mortgages, loans, foreign exchange, interest rates) which parties agree to exchange over time; a way of buying and selling risk in international financial markets

offshore financial centers

states or jurisdictions with few regulations on banking and financial transactions, often with low taxation; used by individuals and international banks to transfer funds

comparative advantage

the ability of a country to make and export a good relatively more efficiently than other countries; the basis for the liberal economic principle that countries benefit from free trade among nations

Heckscher-Ohlin theory

theory that a country will export goods that makes intensive use of the factors of production in which it is well-endowed

Global North

the developed countries, mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, including the countries in North America, Europe, Japan and South Korea

Global South

the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, and Southern Asia

Washington Consensus

a version of economic liberalism that holds that through specific liberal economic policies, privatization, government deregulation, and trade liberalization, can economic development occur

structural adjustment programs

IMF policies and recommendations aimed to guide states out of balance-of-payment difficulties and economic crises, consistent with the Washington Consensus

sustainable development

an approach to economic development that tries to reconcile current economic growth and environmental protection with the needs of future generations

Beijing Consensus

an alternative to economic liberalism; experimenting with policies in state capitalism, with the government playing an active role in picking economic winners and losers

Endnotes

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ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Crises of Economic Globalization

International crises have been a recurrent feature of the global economic system, ranging from the 1982 Mexican debt crisis to the Asian financial crisis (1997–99) to the financial crisis of 2008 to the economic meltdown of 2020. The booms and busts of international petroleum markets have been particularly volatile. As a key commodity necessary for economic growth in the industrial era, a major driver of economic success for the oil-exporting countries that depend on revenue for foreign exchange, and the financier of sovereign wealth funds, petroleum plays a key role. Yet in one year, 2008, oil prices ranged from a high of $145 a barrel to a low of $33 a barrel, disrupting markets and economies worldwide. Although Marx saw such crises and volatility as a fatal weakness of the capitalist system, economic liberalism predicts that the market will regain equilibrium.

Indeed, reforms were undertaken after many of the historic crises to ensure that the underlying conditions would not recur. For example, after the depression of the 1930s, the banking system was reformed. Financial standards in accounting, bank regulations, and ratings agencies were established to improve information and transparency. When states encountered economic difficulties, the Bretton Woods institutions were available for temporary fixes. And the volatility of petroleum markets was met for a time by the establishment of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1960 to try to manage production and hence stabilize prices. But economic globalization in the hyper-connected world of the 2000s may lead to significant crises in which small actions in one place can spread rapidly to have global effects,29 whether a meltdown of the global financial system or an economic contraction caused by a pandemic.

The 2008–2009 Global Financial Crisis

Despite all the reforms undertaken during past economic crises, the Bretton Woods institutions did not include actual surveillance and temporary fixes for richer countries or the economically strong United States. The 1980s and 1990s saw an explosion of unregulated, highly leveraged financial instruments, including oil futures and derivatives markets. U.S.-based financial institutions and governmental units at all levels were participating in those markets. Excess credit against insufficient equity prevailed across the housing market, the financial sector, and consumer-credit markets. That spending spree was accompanied by the importation of cheap goods from China, causing an unsustainable trade imbalance with China and the oil-exporting countries. By 2007, it was clear that the U.S. economy itself was exhibiting fundamental structural weaknesses, although few policy makers were ready to take action. First to feel the impact was the subprime mortgage market. Because financial companies and international banks were carrying unsustainable debt with no assets to back up the loans, defaults increased, credit became more difficult to acquire, and private investment dried up.

What began as a financial crisis centered in the United States rapidly became a global economic crisis. The U.S.-based financial instruments that had spawned the excess lending had been sold abroad to investors ranging from local communities in Norway to banks in Europe and East Asia and investors in Japan and China. What safer place to invest, they thought, than the United States! That proved not to be the case. Financial institutions were unable to meet their obligations. Credit became almost impossible to obtain in the United States and Europe. Businesses cut expenditures and workforces. Consumer demand plummeted. States such as China, South Korea, and Japan, dependent on exports to the United States and Europe, saw their markets shrink and export earnings fall. Oil prices dropped by 69 percent between July and December 2008, severely affecting such oil-exporting countries as Russia, Angola, and Venezuela. In emerging markets dependent on private foreign investment, investment plummeted; in 2008, it was less than half that of a year earlier. In late 2008, Iceland became the first state victim when its

banking system collapsed. In the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe, economies virtually collapsed. International trade declined. The crisis rippled outward to developing countries that faced the prospect of sharply reduced or negative growth and the erosion of gains from globalization-driven growth. The speed and depth of the collapse in global financial and international trade markets surprised even the experts; the self-correcting mechanisms were not working as economic liberals had theorized.

Both the United States and various EU member governments took unprecedented steps, bailing out banks and insurance companies to get credit markets functioning again and stimulate investor confidence. These same states, along with Japan and China, each responded with substantial economic stimulus packages to encourage economic growth. Some coordinated actions were taken among central bankers. The U.S. Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, and the Bank of England engaged in currency swaps.

The IMF also responded to the crisis by making available almost $250 billion for credit lines. Iceland became the first Western country to borrow from the IMF since 1976. Substantial loans were made to Ukraine, Hungary, and Pakistan. The IMF, with an infusion of $750 billion, created the Short-Term Liquidity Facility for emerging-market countries suffering temporary liquidity problems. It reorganized the Exogenous Shocks Facility, designed to help low-income states by providing assistance more rapidly. The International Development Association increased its loans to the poorest developing countries. Short-term responses were needed, as well as better long-term cross-border supervision of financial institutions, standards for accounting and banking regulations, and an early warning system for the world economy. But these were not yet in place for the subsequent Eurozone crisis, a year later.

A number of European states, including Greece, Ireland, and Spain, had since early 2000 been spending beyond their capacity, borrowing from international banks. When the global economic crisis hit, households faced underwater mortgages, foreclosures, and even bankruptcy. Many individuals whose

net worth had dramatically declined now faced unemployment and declining wages. And governments dependent on borrowing in international markets were turned away, deepening their debt obligations. But the crisis was also caused by an imbalance of trade. Germany's export trade had grown, while that of the so-called PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain) had worsening balance-of-payments positions. Wages rose faster than gains in productivity, making their exports uncompetitive, while Germany's wage restraint made German exports even more competitive.

The arrangements within the EU and the Eurozone with no fiscal union and no treasury made addressing the crisis even more difficult. Individual states did not have the ability to manage their monetary policy: they could not print more money, and they could not devalue their currency to make their exports more competitive. Labor mobility was constrained, and there were no agreed-upon procedures for transferring funds between states.

Finally, after more than 25 summits to address the crisis, the PIGS undertook numerous reforms to reduce government debt, slashing expenditures, increasing the retirement age, promising to improve the tax collection system, and using financial transfers to avert bankruptcy. Greece, for example, was forced to take bailouts from the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the EU, promising in turn to slash public spending, improve tax collection, and renegotiate labor contracts. Just as economist C. Fred Bergsten predicted, tighter constraints imposed on government budgets have slowed the process of European integration.30

COVID-19 and Resulting Economic Crisis

In 2019–20, the international community faced an economic crisis like no other—a crisis not precipitated by irrational individual behavior, errant state policies, or unaccountable international elites. This crisis stemmed from an unknown virus which in a very short time gained a foothold in Wuhan, China, then like a cascading wave spread to Europe, the United States, South Asia, Latin America, and finally to Africa. In 2020 alone, COVID-19 had infected 86 million

people and killed an estimated 1.8 million worldwide. (See Chapter 12 for more on the coronavirus pandemic.) To contain the spread of the virus, countries locked down whole economies, save for essential services. Global trade flows collapsed—at the peak of the pandemic, global trade flows were the lowest since the Great Depression. Unemployment skyrocketed. The financial loss was twice as great as the recession caused by the 2008–2009 financial crisis.

Lockdowns across Europe to help stop the spread of COVID-19 caused a financial downturn as economic activity was abruptly halted. Only essential travel was permitted, and all were encouraged to remain at home, stunting economic growth.

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Even in the economically strong states, GDP dropped precipitously in just one quarter (April–June 2020) while unemployment rose dramatically, bringing years of economic growth to an abrupt halt. In the developing world, the economic impact was also felt immediately. South Asian countries had the worst economic performance in 40 years. Countries like Ecuador, Zambia, Nigeria, and Middle East countries, who were reliant on petroleum exports for revenue, saw profits decline as demand sank and oil prices collapsed. It is estimated that the Middle Eastern oil producers will see GDP to be 12 percent below expected pre-crisis levels five years into the future. Other commodity producing countries saw a similar economic decline. Countries dependent on tourism for revenue—such as Costa Rica, Morocco, Thailand, Tanzania, and South Africa—saw massive layoffs in that sector as tourism ground to a halt. Countries which depend on remittances for more than 20 percent of their GDP saw the flow of remittances slashed as migrant laborers lost their jobs. States lost a source of income and tax revenue.31 Unemployment rates of over 30 percent were found in many African countries, and over 15 percent in Latin American countries.

Even before the pandemic, half of the almost 60 low-income countries had high levels of public debt. With the pandemic,

many emerging markets and developing governments have seen revenues collapse and private capital flows dry up just when they need to spend more to support their critical health sector, provide help to a jobless population, support businesses, and stimulate economic activities. By the end of 2020, 38 governments were at risk of default, more than two times the number at the end of 2009. And the debt owed by 73 of the poorest countries is owed not only to private creditors like bondholders, banks, and multilateral institutions but also to China, a new financier.

These macro figures do not tell the human story. Job losses in many African countries and in India with a large informal employment sector are in a particularly dire situation. Those workers have no social safety net, no unemployment insurance, and no savings. Recipients of remittances have lost a vital source of income. And with schools closed and adults out of work, an estimated 24 million children have been forced to turn to low-wage labor to help support their families and are unlikely to return to school. Young girls are being married off to ease financial burdens. Vaccinations for other contagious diseases are being postponed. Given these human impacts, it is unlikely that states can recover fast enough to meet any of the Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, the 2020 Goalkeepers Report finds that progress has now been stopped for all 18 indicators of the SDGs; the year 2020 has seen a regression back to levels last seen in the 1990s—a setback of 25 years.32 Estimates vary about how many people will fall into extreme poverty (currently defined as an income of less than $1.90 a day) from 37 million to between 71 million and 100 million and, the gloomier still, 490 million people in 70 countries.33 Of the developing regions, Latin America appears to be the most severely affected, with the ranks of the poor growing from 22 million to 209 million, with 78 million people living in extreme poverty.34

The IMF estimates that $18 trillion has been spent to stimulate economies around the world. The responses of the major powers to avert an even greater crisis have been critical. During 2020, the U.S. Federal Reserve took an unprecedented array of monetary measures: it slashed the fund rate for

lending to zero percent, purchased government bonds and securities (called quantitative easing), created new emergency facilities to help certain sectors, eased regulatory oversight, and loosened bank capital requirements. These measures—worth an estimated $6.1 trillion—are designed to keep the market functioning, add liquidity, and aid households, employers, and governments. In addition, the U.S. Congress took fiscal measures, passing the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), allocating $2 trillion to individuals, businesses, and governments and in 2021 the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan.

Not all countries took the same approach. Germany, with a budget surplus before the crisis, covered worker salaries so that firms would remain solvent and workers paid. They reduced the value-added tax (VAT) for consumers to stimulate spending, provided grants to small businesses, and subsidized investments in green energy.

The European Union, after arduous negotiations, authorized over one trillion euros to help members like Spain and Italy most affected by the pandemic. The European Commission itself was authorized to borrow money in the international financial markets to offer employment supports and subsidize the EU's longer-term objectives of digital transformation and climate neutrality. And the European Central Bank provided for 750 billion euros to relieve government debt, 120 billion euros for quantitative easing, and support for the European Fund for Strategic Investments. To provide such funding, the European Stability and Growth Pact that limits the amount of debt the EU can accrue was suspended. The agreement came at a "pivotal moment." As the European Commission president optimistically stated, "Europe, as a whole, has now a big chance to come out stronger from the crisis."35 But that optimism may have been premature, as European economies continued to lockdown with outbreaks of COVID-19 and vaccines were slow to be rolled out.

The developed world has already begun structural changes to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. These include changes which are consistent with economic nationalism: reshoring supply chains especially for essential

pharmaceuticals, diversifying distribution networks, and moving away from just-in-time supply chains to ensure provision of essential goods. These measures are designed to give governments greater means to respond to the epidemic at the national level. They have also taken steps consistent with liberal economic thinking: keeping interest rates low to stimulate borrowing and providing stimulus funds to get businesses back to prosperity, anticipating that the free market will pull economies out of the crisis.

Some developing countries, including the Philippines, Tunisia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Brazil, and Peru, have distributed cash handouts to their populations, thanks to electronic banking. Most countries, however, are unable to provide such funds. The IMF estimated that by the end of 2021, another $12 trillion may be needed. For the developing countries, that means reliance on both the multilateral institutions as well as their creditors and donors. The IMF responded in the early stage of the pandemic with the Rapid Credit Facility, providing emergency financing to over 100 countries and the Short-Term Liquidity Line for short-term balance-of-payments support. Grants for debt relief have been disbursed through the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust affecting 83 countries by the end of 2020. Faced with a "debt pandemic,"36 these countries have an urgent need for more debt restructuring. The G20 continues to extend the time frame for the suspension of bilateral debt payments for 73 countries, but that does not affect commercial lenders. China, the biggest bilateral creditor, may not be able or willing to restructure, even though its economy bounced back as its trade surplus ballooned in 2020.

The IMF, however, is limited to $1 trillion in lending and that appears not to have been enough. The other multilateral institutions, particularly the World Bank, have been slow to respond. Under the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF), financed by bonds sold to private investors, the bank could not release funds until 12 weeks after the outbreak. With that delayed response and stringent conditions, the bank has been slowly repositioning its resources, including a $160 billion infusion for relief and restructuring and $12 billion for

poor countries to buy COVID-19 vaccines. But as the chief World Bank economist warned, full recovery will take at least five years and will occur faster in some places and slower in others.37 Crises do not affect all states equally.

Responses to Economic Crises

In the immediate aftermath of both the global financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis, reforms were passed. The surveillance functions of the IMF to anticipate risks and threats were given new life. The G7 and G20 countries became more active in trying to address the crises. Rules and regulations of the private financial institutions in many states were strengthened and made more transparent, although the latter has proven more difficult than anticipated. Reforms in the Eurozone states gave more authority to the European Central Bank to act as a regulator of banks in member countries and gave more authority to an IMF-like institution—namely, the European Stability Mechanism—to handle bailouts and work with the European Central Bank. Economic liberals believe that these rather incremental reforms could preserve the system, giving more transparency to market transactions. They point to the promising economic recovery after 2010 as evidence that equilibrium could reemerge. But the moral hazard is not alleviated: states rescued from the consequences of their reckless behavior may have little incentive to change that behavior in the future.

The reforms spawned by the global financial crisis could not prevent the scourge of COVID-19. But the capacity of the international financial institutions to respond to the pandemic was enhanced by the actions taken more than ten years before: the establishment of special facilities and programs, richer states able to run deficits in order to prevent a more devastating economic impact, and the ability and willingness of the European Union to design a program to aid its member states through the issuance of EU bonds rather than bonds tied to individual states.

At the annual meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in October 2020, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warned of the difficult economic recovery from the pandemic.

How will institutions like the IMF respond to future economic crises, such as those posed by climate change?

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The real issue for reform concerns the ability to manage the risk connected with a pandemic. That involves minimizing not only the health impact of outbreaks but also the economic impact. That may include investing in formal and informal disease surveillance systems as well as spending for pandemic preparedness, including stockpiles and vaccine research and distribution. Managing economic risks includes insurance programs to distribute the economic burdens across states and regions. The cost and difficulties connected with managing that economic risk—and the response of economic nationalism—have revived the debate over globalization. Do these economic crises point to the end of economic globalization as now practiced?

The Debate over Globalization: The View from Economic Theories

The debate over globalization is not new. In 1994, at a time coinciding with the beginning of NAFTA, an army of peasant guerrillas seized towns in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas to protest against an economic and political system that they viewed as biased against them. Feeling that economic decisions were beyond their control, the peasants protested against the structures of the international market, the state, and economic globalization. This rebellion alerted the world to the challenges of globalization, and the protests and demonstrations detailed in the beginning of this chapter show that the debate over economic globalization continues unabated. Ironically, these stories have been told and magnified via the Internet, one of the by-products of globalization.

Reactions to the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, Brexit in Great Britain, and the election of Donald J. Trump in the United States are manifestations of the antiglobalization sentiment, which is driven by individuals who believe that globalization has produced job loss, lower wages, and uncontrolled immigration, all of which they blame for their

economic problems. The pandemic has reinforced that sentiment and accelerated trends that had already begun: a return to economic nationalism in many developed countries and, to many in developing countries, a confirmation that economic radicals were right all along.

Most adherents of economic liberalism argue that globalization essentially results from changes in transportation and communication and those two trends have not changed. And the United States, despite intense competition from China, is still the financial hegemon buoyed by the dollar as reserve currency, and it enjoys key advantages of geography, demography, and energy.38 Economic globalization will continue to benefit the United States and the world, perhaps modified by incremental reforms. Or as Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman put it, "Accepting and understanding the reality of chained globalization must be the first step toward limiting those risks. Policymakers cannot cling to fantasies of either decoupled isolation or benign integration."39

Economic nationalists prefer a different future. As they did during the pandemic, economic nationalists applaud a return to state-level policies designed to protect a state's own citizens and the rise of state-controlled enterprises. This future reinforces their belief that the state has a national interest in determining economic policy and that it sees other states' growing economic prowess as a threat to its own. After all, as old-style mercantilists did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, economic nationalists argue that economic policy should be subservient to the state and its interests; for them, politics determines economics. Economic nationalists, like the mercantilists before them, believe that the international system is dominated by competition among states for power; to economic nationalists, the global economy is a struggle over relative gains. States will take any action necessary to survive, protecting their self-interests. In the aftermath of crises and the consequences of economic globalization, economic nationalists support the adoption of more unilateral policies that are favorable to one's own state.

Economic radical theorists have always been critical of the liberal economic path, and are especially distrustful of

economic globalization. Development has not occurred, they assert, and for dependency theorists in particular, MNCs and their facilitators are the culprit; they exploit the resources of the poor, and they perpetuate the dominance of the North and the dependency of the South. Radicals detest instruments of dependency, exploitation, and imperialism. They argue that decisions made in the economic and financial centers of the world create an inherently unequal and unfair international economic system. And it was those decisions and policies that were responsible for the global financial crisis. Radicals believe that political power must be altered and international regulations aimed at redistributing wealth must be enacted. Thus, radicals recognize that delivering the hatchet to economic globalization would be necessary to achieve their goals of a more just and equitable international economic system. The economic cliff that the developing world saw in the COVID-19 nightmare reaffirms that position.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is an incorrect statement about the 2008–2009 global financial crisis? Several European countries faced a balance-of-payments and debt crisis.

Institutions such as the IMF and the International Development Association failed during the crisis.

There was a sharp decline in international trade during the crisis.

Globalization made the crisis worse because of the interconnected nature of the global economy.

State decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, including reshoring supply chains especially for essential pharmaceuticals, diversifying distribution networks, and moving away from just-in-time supply chains to ensure provision of essential goods, were most consistent with which economic theoretical perspective? economic nationalism

economic liberalism

realism

economic radicalism

Glossary

moral hazard

problem when states or individuals are not made to pay the consequences of reckless behavior; they have little incentive to change that behavior

Endnotes

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IN SUM: MOVING BEYOND ISSUES OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

The debate over economic globalization—one of the key issues in the international political economy—will no doubt continue to be salient as the international community confronts a suite of newer issues in the twenty-first century. As we discuss in the coming chapters, these issues include challenges to human rights norms, environmental degradation and climate change, and threats to human security. In addressing these issues, both intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations will play an important role. We discuss those important institutions and groups in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

You are an economist in the Mexican government. What policies can you suggest to increase regional trade?

Economic liberals, mercantilists/economic nationalists, and economic radicals see multinational corporations in different ways. What are those differences?

How are the international financial system and the international monetary system more complex than they were in the past?

Does economic regionalization lead to globalization? Why or why not? Provide evidence.

How has your belief in the economic liberal model been modified by the global economic crises?

Key Terms

balance of payments (p. 263) Beijing Consensus (p. 291) BRICS (p. 267)

capital accounts (p. 263) comparative advantage (p. 275) current accounts (p. 263) derivatives (p. 273)

economic liberalism (p. 259) economic nationalism (p. 260) economic radicalism (p. 260) exchange rates (p. 262)

fiscal policies (p. 262)

foreign direct investment (FDI) (p. 271) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (p. 268) Global North (p. 284)

Global South (p. 285)

Group of 7 (G7) (p. 268)

Heckscher-Ohlin theory (p. 276) International Monetary Fund (IMF) (p. 267) macroeconomic policies (p. 262) mercantilism (p. 259)

microeconomic policies (p. 262) monetary policies (p. 262) moral hazard (p. 300)

most-favored-nation (MFN) principle (p. 268) nontariff barriers (p. 262) offshore financial centers (p. 273) portfolio investment (p. 271) protectionism (p. 259)

sovereign wealth funds (p. 272) structural adjustment programs (p. 285) sustainable development (p. 287) tariffs (p. 262)

Washington Consensus (p. 285) World Bank (p. 265)

World Trade Organization (WTO) (p. 269)

Glossary

balance of payments

a country's current and capital account balances; may be positive (surplus) or negative (deficit)

Beijing Consensus

an alternative to economic liberalism; experimenting with policies in state capitalism, with the government playing an active role in picking economic winners and losers

BRICS

an informal group of emerging economic powers, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

capital accounts

measure of the flows of capital between countries, including foreign direct investment and portfolio investment in and out

comparative advantage

the ability of a country to make and export a good relatively more efficiently than other countries; the basis for the liberal economic principle that countries benefit from free trade among nations

current accounts

measure of net border flows between countries of goods, services, governmental transfers, and capital investments

derivatives

financial instruments often derived from an asset (mortgages, loans, foreign exchange, interest rates) which parties agree to exchange over time; a way of buying and selling risk in international financial markets

economic liberalism

ideas based on Adam Smith that when individuals pursue their own self-interest, efficiency for everyone is achieved; markets function best when governments interfere the least

economic nationalism

modern version of core mercantilist ideas that economic policies should be subservient to the national interest

economic radicalism

beliefs drawn from Marxist and neo-Marxist writing that poor labor conditions, colonial expansion, and divisions between the rich and poor are blamed on international capitalism

exchange rates

the price of one currency in relation to another; rates may float with the market or be fixed by governments

fiscal policies

policies affecting a government's budget, namely level of government spending and tax rates

foreign direct investment (FDI)

investing in a state, usually by multinational corporations, by establishing a manufacturing facility or financing investments in extractive industries or transportation

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

founded by treaty in 1947 as the Bretton Woods institution responsible for negotiating a liberal international trade regime that included the principles of nondiscrimination in trade and most-favored-nation status; reformed as the World Trade Organization in 1995

Global North

the developed countries, mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, including the countries in North America, Europe, Japan and South Korea

Global South

the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, and Southern Asia

Group of 7 (G7)

group of the traditional economic powers (U.S., Great Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, Canada) who meet annually to address economic problems; when Russia joins, the G8 discussions turn to political issues

Heckscher-Ohlin theory

theory that a country will export goods that makes intensive use of the factors of production in which it is well-endowed

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

the Bretton Woods institution originally charged with helping states deal with temporary balance-of-payments problems; now plays a broader role in assisting debtor developing states by offering loans to those who institute specific policies or structural adjustment programs

macroeconomic policies

government policies designed to address macroeconomic conditions, including fiscal and monetary policies

mercantilism

economic theory that international commerce should increase a state's wealth, especially gold; state power is enhanced by a favorable balance of trade

microeconomic policies

government policies adopted to affect regulations, subsidies, competitiveness, and antitrust actions

monetary policy

policies affecting national interest rates or exchange rates designed to affect employment and inflation rates

moral hazard

problem when states or individuals are not made to pay the consequences of reckless behavior; they have little incentive to change that behavior

most-favored-nation (MFN) principle

principle in international trade agreements when one state promises to give another state the same treatment in trade as the first state gives to its most-favored trading partner

nontariff barriers

restrictions on international trade other than tariffs, including quantitative restrictions and quotas; designed to protect health, safety, national security, or competitiveness

offshore financial centers

states or jurisdictions with few regulations on banking and financial transactions, often with low taxation; used by individuals and international banks to transfer funds

portfolio investment

private investment in another state by purchasing stocks or bonds, without taking direct control of the investments

protectionism

state policies imposing barriers to restrict imports for a variety of reasons

sovereign wealth funds

state-controlled investment companies that manage large foreign exchange reserves in capital surplus countries like China or in petroleum-exporting countries (Norway, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia)

structural adjustment programs

IMF policies and recommendations aimed to guide states out of balance-of-payment difficulties and economic crises, consistent with the Washington Consensus

sustainable development

an approach to economic development that tries to reconcile current economic growth and environmental protection with the needs of future generations

tariffs

tax imposed on imports which raises the price of the good, designed to protect domestic producers from competition by foreign producers

Washington Consensus

a version of economic liberalism that holds that through specific liberal economic policies, privatization, government deregulation, and trade liberalization, can economic development occur

World Bank

a global lending agency focused on financing projects in developing countries; formally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, established as one of the key Bretton Woods institutions to deal with reconstruction and development after World War II

World Trade Organization (WTO)

intergovernmental organization designed to support the principles of liberal free trade; includes enforcement measures and dispute settlement mechanisms; established in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

9

Intergovernmental Organizations and Nongovernmental Organizations

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The coronavirus pandemic forced the typically bustling halls of the United Nations to empty out in favor of online meetings of the UN General Assembly to limit the spread of COVID-19. The sparse attendance mirrored the UN's own disjointed response to the pandemic and highlighted internal weaknesses of the organization.

Every September, the opening sessions of the United Nations General Assembly are widely anticipated. Which leaders will appear? Whom will they meet? What role do they envision for the United Nations? But in 2020, the 75th birthday of the UN, the halls of the General Assembly were silent as the coronavirus pandemic forced a shift to a virtual event. With priorities focused elsewhere, the celebration was muted. Restrictions from the pandemic had prevented the UN not only from commemorating its inception but also from tackling major issues during much of 2020. Crises in Nagorno-Karabakh, Venezuela, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen, among others, had not been thoroughly debated in the increasingly divided Security Council. Even though it was headquartered in New York City, where the pandemic struck especially hard, the UN had not recognized the pandemic as a security threat that brought many other cities and countries to a standstill and

economic lockdown, although the World Health Organization, a specialized UN organization, had.

What will be the effects of a UN increasingly sidelined on critical international issues? Will the General Assembly regain its position as a useful voice for all states? Can the increasing tensions among the permanent members of the Security Council be diminished so that decisions can be made to address the crises of the twenty-first century? Will the United States reengage with the United Nations after four years of a presidential administration which questioned the worth of the organization? The effectiveness and indeed the very legitimacy of the UN was at stake. If intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the UN cannot act, can international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seek to fill those roles? Or has the international system changed to the extent that both forms of cooperation are no longer relevant?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain why intergovernmental organizations form.

Describe what intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, have contributed to international peace and security.

Trace how the European Union changed over time.

Describe the roles nongovernmental organizations play in international relations.

Analyze the contending perspectives international relations theorists bring to their analysis of intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Creation of IGOs

Intergovernmental organizations—international institutions established by states and whose members are the governments of states—are widespread in the international system today. Why have states organized themselves collectively in these

IGOs? In Chapter 7, we learned the neoliberal institutionalist reasoning: international institutions, which are sets of rules meant to govern international behavior through treaties and formal organizations, foster cooperation to help states solve common problems. When states repeatedly interact with one another, they can reciprocate cooperative actions or punish noncooperative ones. International institutions help to solidify these repeated interactions by creating lasting relationships among states. International law also defines and codifies what constitutes cooperative behavior, and international organizations help monitor state behavior and share that information with others, creating transparency in state actions. International institutions are thus often at the heart of international cooperation.

International institutions are also particularly useful for solving two sets of problems. One set of problems arises from the need to cooperate on technical, nonpolitical, and transnational issues that states often cannot address individually. What we call a functionalist approach advocates building on and expanding the habits of cooperation in these types of issue areas, nurtured by groups of technical experts outside formal state channels. This explains why international cooperation began in specific, technical issue areas such as health and communications during the nineteenth century. Out of that cooperation came the first intergovernmental organizations created by formal treaties. According to the functionalist argument, cooperation in these technical issue areas would spill over into cooperation in more political issue areas and eventually even into military affairs. Increasingly, international organizations would be created to coordinate cooperation in more political issue areas, eventually lessening economic disparities and eliminating the root causes of war. In this school of thought, David Mitrany foresaw in A Working Peace System, “a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all nations would be gradually integrated.”1

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IN FOCUS

Functionalism

New functional units should be created to solve specific technical problems.

People and groups will develop habits of cooperation, which will spill over from technical issue areas to political cooperation.

In the end, economic disparities will lessen and war will be eliminated.

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The second set of problems international institutions help solve is the management of collective goods. In “The Tragedy of the Commons,” biologist Garrett Hardin tells the story of a group of herders who share a common grazing area. Each herder finds it economically rational to increase the size of his own herd, allowing him to sell more in the market. Yet if all herders follow individually rational behavior, then the group loses: too many animals graze the land and the quality of the pasture deteriorates, leading to decreased output for all. As each person rationally attempts to maximize his own gain, the collective benefits diminish, and, eventually, all individuals suffer.2

The common grazing area, as Hardin describes, is a collective good. It is available to all group members, regardless of individual contribution. In the international system, use of collective goods involves interdependent activities and choices by states and individuals. For example, the ozone layer is a collective good, providing a protective shield from the sun’s rays for all. But chlorofluorocarbons, chemicals that make refrigeration possible, deplete the ozone layer over the long term. Refrigeration benefits states and individuals by extending the lives of food and medicine, but it has negative environmental consequences. What can be done to manage these unintended effects?

Hardin proposed several possible solutions to this tragedy of the commons. First, use coercion: force nations or peoples to control the use of collective goods. States, for example, could force people to limit the number of children they have in order

to curb the use of resources that harm the environment. Second, restructure the preferences of states through rewards and punishments. Offer positive incentives for states to refrain from engaging in the destruction of the commons; tax, or threaten to tax, those who use chlorofluorocarbons or fail to cooperate. Third, alter the size of the group formed within the collective. Close monitoring is easier in smaller groups and smaller groups can more effectively exert pressure on their members because violations of the commons will be more easily noticed. For many, international institutions, and especially formal international organizations, are the preferred way to address problems of the commons—the sea, space, the environment.

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IN FOCUS

Collective Goods

Collective goods are available to all members of a group, regardless of individual contributions.

Some activities of states involve the provision of collective goods.

Groups need to devise strategies to overcome problems of collective goods caused by the negative consequences of the actions of others—the "tragedy of the commons."

Strategies include coercion, altering preferences by offering incentives, and altering the size of the group.

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The Roles of IGOs

Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Civil Aviation Organization, among many others, can help states address major problems in the international system.3 IGOs foster habits of cooperation as states become socialized to regular interactions, such as through the European Union. Some programs of IGOs, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency's nuclear-monitoring program, establish regularized processes of information gathering, analysis, and surveillance.

Some IGOs, such as the World Trade Organization, develop procedures for making rules surrounding trade, settling disputes, and punishing those who fail to follow the rules. IGOs can also facilitate cooperation by reducing the transaction costs of negotiating cooperative agreements, as discussed in Chapter 7, and may even play key roles in the bargaining processes themselves. IGOs also facilitate the formation of transnational societal networks. By bringing states together, IGOs reduce the incentive to cheat and enhance the value of a good reputation.

For states, IGOs both expand the possibilities for foreign policy making and add to the constraints under which states conduct and, in particular, implement foreign policy. States join IGOs to use them as instruments of foreign policy. IGOs may legitimize a state's viewpoints and policies, and states may seek out approval from IGOs to bolster their credibility on various issues. IGOs also make information about other states more readily available, thereby enhancing transparency in the policymaking process. Some IGOs conduct specific activities that support and augment state policy.

But IGOs also constrain member states by setting international, and hence, national, agendas and by forcing governments to make decisions or develop new ways to implement those decisions. Many states actually formed environmental ministries so that they could develop expertise and respond to UN initiatives on that topic, influencing those states' national agendas. Both large and small states may have to align their domestic policies with the international agenda if they wish to benefit from their membership.

Not all IGOs perform all of these functions, and not all of them do so effectively. One empirical study of IGO vitality based on 70 international economic organizations from 1948 to 2013 finds that about 52 percent of IGOs are alive and functioning and have a bureaucracy capable of enacting policy, but another 38 percent, so-called zombies, continue to act but have made no progress on achieving their mandates. Another 10 percent are essentially dead, existing in name but having no visible level of activity.4 Indeed, not all of the approximately 240 IGOs worldwide are actually carrying out their functions.

Sometimes, the death of one organization or the failure of an organization to perform its functions leads to its replacement by another organization that tries a different approach. The United Nations, for example, reflects the successes and the failures of its predecessor organization, the League of Nations.

The United Nations

The United Nations can trace its foundations to a number of movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, it reflects relationships developed in the Concert of Europe, as described in Chapter 2, when European powers met at least 30 times between 1815 and 1878 to solve problems. Second, the UN finds roots in the public international unions, organizations designed to address problems stemming from international commerce, communication, and shipping. Third, the UN is the product of the Hague conferences held between 1899 and 1907. In those conferences, representatives met to develop techniques to prevent war—arbitration, conciliation, and international adjudication. But, most of all, the United Nations is a product of the League of Nations experience.

Founded following World War I, the goal of the League was to end all wars; indeed, half of the League Covenant's provisions focused on preventing war. According to the League Covenant, if dispute resolution failed, sanctions would follow, and should they fail, states would act against an aggressor by using force if necessary. The expectation was that if all states acted together, the aggressor would be deterred, and if it were not, all states would join in to punish the aggressor. This is the idea of collective security explained in Chapter 6.

The League did enjoy a number of successes, many of them on territorial issues. It conducted votes in contested areas of Poland and Germany to gauge the will of the population; it demarcated the German-Polish border; it settled territorial disputes between Lithuania and Poland, Finland and Russia, and Bulgaria and Greece. However, the League failed to act decisively in the 1930s against the aggression of Italy when it overran Ethiopia and Japan when it invaded Manchuria. Britain and France had other more pressing interests, and the voluntary sanctions the League did impose had little effect.

The absence of great-power support for the League was most evident in its failure to attract the United States to join the organization, and the League could not prevent the outbreak of World War II. The United Nations built on the League's successes and tried to correct some of its weaknesses.

Basic Principles and Changing Interpretations

The United Nations, like the League of Nations, was founded on three fundamental principles. Yet, over the life of the United Nations, changing realities have significantly challenged each of these principles.5

First, the United Nations is based on the notion of the sovereign equality of member states, as is consistent with the Westphalian tradition. Each state—the United States, Lithuania, India, or Suriname, irrespective of size or population—is legally the equivalent of every other state. This legal equality is the basis for each state's having one vote in the General Assembly. However, the actual inequality of states is recognized in the veto power given to the five permanent members of the Security Council and the special role reserved for the wealthy states in budget negotiations.

Second is the principle that only international problems fall within the jurisdiction of the United Nations. Indicative of the Westphalian influence, the UN Charter does not "authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state" (Article 2, Section 7). Over the life of the United Nations, the once-rigid distinction between domestic and international issues has weakened, leading to a reinterpretation or, some argue, an erosion of sovereignty. Global telecommunications and economic interdependencies, international human rights, election monitoring, and environmental regulation all infringe on traditional areas of domestic jurisdiction and hence on states' sovereignty. War is increasingly intrastate war, which is not legally under the purview of the United Nations. Yet because international human rights are being undermined, because refugees cross national borders, and because weapons are supplied through transnational networks, such conflicts are increasingly viewed as international, and the United Nations is

viewed by some as the appropriate venue for action. These changes have led to increased instances of humanitarian intervention without the consent of the host country (a phenomenon discussed in more detail in Chapter 10).

The third principle is that the United Nations is designed primarily to maintain international peace and security. This principle has meant that member states should refrain from the threat or the use of force; settle disputes by peaceful means, as detailed at the Hague conferences; and support enforcement measures, namely sanctions or use of force.

Although the founders of both the League of Nations and the United Nations focused on security in the realist, classical sense—protection of national territory and sovereignty—the United Nations is increasingly confronted with demands for action to support a broadened view of security. UN operations to feed the starving populations of Somalia and Niger, or to provide relief in the form of food, clothing, and shelter for Haitians and Nepalese forced out of their homes by natural disasters, are examples of this broadened notion of security —"human security." (See Chapter 12.) Expansion into these newer areas of security collides with the domestic authority of states, undermining the principle of state sovereignty. The United Nations' founders recognized the tension between the commitment to act collectively against a member state and the affirmation of state sovereignty. But they could not foresee the dilemmas that changing definitions of security would pose.

The UN Human Rights High Commissioner for Refugees is responsible for protecting refugees and displaced and stateless people. The organization helps provide services to refugees, like those pictured here at a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, and in 2020 helped test refugees for COVID-19.

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Structure

The structure of the United Nations was developed to serve the multiple roles assigned by its Charter, but incremental changes in that structure have accommodated changes in the

international system, particularly the increase in the number of member states from 51 in 1945 to 193 in 2021.

The power and prestige of the five functioning organs of the UN detailed in Table 9.1 have changed over time. The Security Council is tasked with the issue of international peace and security. It was kept small to facilitate swift decision making in response to threats to international peace and security. It has 15 members—five permanent members (the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and the People's Republic of China) that have the ability to veto substantive resolutions passed by the council and ten additional rotating members elected by region. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council has the power to authorize economic sanctions or the use of force against a state that violates international peace and security (as described in more detail below). Security Council resolutions, when passed, are legally binding on all UN members. To pass, those resolutions typically require nine positive votes from the members and zero vetoes.

TABLE 9.1

Principal Organs of the United Nations

ORGAN

MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING

RESPONSIBILITIES

Security Council

15 members: five permanent with veto, ten rotating members elected by region

Peace and security: identifies aggressor; decides on enforcement measures

General Assembly

193 members; each state has one vote; members work in six functional committees

Debates any topic within Charter's purview; elects members to special bodies

Secretariat, headed by Secretary-General

Secretariat of 37,000; secretary-general elected for five-year renewable term by General Assembly and Security Council

Secretariat: gathers information, coordinates and conducts activities; secretary-general: chief administrative officer, spokesperson

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

54 members elected for three-year terms

Coordinates economic and social welfare programs; coordinates action of specialized agencies (FAO, WHO, UNESCO)

International Court of Justice

15 judges

Noncompulsory jurisdiction on cases brought by states and international organizations

In the first twenty years of the UN during the height of the Cold War, the Security Council was deadlocked by the Soviet Union's frequent use of the veto, which it used 106 times. In the next forty years (1966–2005), the United States has used its veto more times than any other permanent member, over 80 times, while the Soviet Union/Russia issued only 16 additional vetoes. During the 1990s China generally chose to abstain. Since 2006, China has exercised its veto seven times, often joining with Russia's 17 vetoes. And the United States vetoed six resolutions, three during the Trump administration.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has regained power, particularly during the 1990s when the number of annual official meetings rose, the number of resolutions passed increased with consensus voting, and informal meetings among the permanent members became more frequent. With greater cooperation among the permanent powers, the council authorized force against Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. Since then, the Security Council took on more armed conflicts, imposed sanctions more often, created war crimes tribunals to prosecute war criminals, authorized protectorates in Kosovo and East Timor, and, after 9/11,

expanded involvement in antiterrorism activities and coped with the disruptions from the Arab Spring.

But after that highwater mark, identified as “the golden age,” the Security Council has been characterized “more by rupture and paralysis than action.” The divisions within the council have deepened, explaining its relative inaction or silence on issues from Syria and Yemen to Ukraine and Venezuela. The UN is in “sad shape,” with the council’s politicization and irrelevance with respect to the pandemic.6

Although the Security Council has enormous formal power, it does not have direct control over the means to use that power. It depends on states for funding, personnel, enforcement of sanctions, and military action. A state’s willingness to contribute depends on whether it perceives the council as legitimate. The issue of legitimacy has spawned a vigorous debate: Do most states accept the right of the council to make hard decisions even when some members disagree, or does the council’s failure to do so on key issues delegitimize the organization?7

The General Assembly is the main deliberative body of the United Nations and permits debate on any topic under its purview. All member states are represented in the General Assembly. The bulk of the work of the General Assembly is done in six functional committees: Disarmament and Security; Economic and Financial; Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural; Political and Decolonization; Administrative and Budgetary; and Legal. While each member state has one vote in the General Assembly, debate on resolutions emerging from the committees tends to be organized around regionally based voting blocs. General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, and thus many are passed with little concern for implementation. Many of the resolutions are functionally meaningless, whether they are ritual resolutions that are voted on annually for political purposes, or they are simply too broad.

But some resolutions are meaningful. The resolutions of the General Assembly often provide the basis for new international law by articulating new principles, including the

common heritage of humankind and sustainable development. As these principles are repeated, they have become the basis for soft law—norms that have generated international consensus. And many of the resolutions sponsored by one of the major caucusing groups—the Group of 77 (a coalition of developing states), regional groups (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), or the so-called Global South—have proved pathbreaking. That group of states has been able to draw attention to some prominent issues including economic and social development and inequities in the liberal economic order. Those issues have often found homes in specific programs and other organizations.

Occasionally, the work of the General Assembly attracts public attention, as it did during the 2011, 2012, and 2017 debates over the status of Palestine. In 2012, Palestine became a nonmember observer state in the UN, thanks to its supporters in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In 2015, it was admitted to the International Criminal Court. And in 2017, the assembly overwhelmingly demanded that the United States rescind its declaration recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Palestine's status remains a contentious one within the UN just as it is in the international system.

Generally, the assembly provides a forum for member states to express positions and conduct the UN's housekeeping functions. But its work has been marginalized compared to that of the Security Council.

The Secretariat has expanded to employ a global staff of about 37,000 under the authority of the secretary-general. About one-third of the personnel are located at UN headquarters. The secretary-general is elected by the General Assembly after recommendation by the Security Council. Having few formal powers, the secretary-general's authority depends on persuasive capability and an aura of neutrality. The personality and level of engagement of the secretary-general can therefore affect his/her ability to exert power in important ways. For example, Secretary-General Kofi Annan forged an activist agenda until his retirement in 2006. He negotiated a compromise between Iraq and the United States over the authority, composition, and timing of UN weapon inspections

in Iraq; he mediated between Iraq and the international community; and he also implemented significant administrative and budgetary reforms. A highly visible secretary-general, he led the international response to HIV/AIDS, promoted better relations with the private sector, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001.

His successor, Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea, served two terms, tackling initiatives on climate change, the Darfur crisis, preventive diplomacy, violence against women, and LGBT rights. Yet he was generally viewed as a weak leader, lacking in key communication skills and preferring to operate below the radar. But, as one journalist acknowledged, "The fact is that when the great powers squabble, there's little that anyone in the organization can accomplish, be they competent or not."8

In 2017, António Guterres became the ninth secretary-general. A former Portuguese politician and diplomat and former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Guterres ran in a vigorously contested election, and despite strong pressure at the UN to elect its first-ever female secretary-general, he prevailed. He has made management reforms a priority—like delegating more authority to heads of missions and promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

Other organs of the UN have also increased and decreased in importance over time. The most notable examples are the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Trusteeship Council, albeit for very different reasons. ECOSOC was originally established to coordinate the various economic and social activities within the UN system through a number of specialized agencies. But the expansion of those activities and the increase in the number of programs has made ECOSOC's task of coordination an unwieldy one. In the case of the Trusteeship Council, its very success has led to its demise. Once a key organ, it successfully supervised decolonization and phased out trust territories placed under UN authority during their transition to independent states. The Council suspended its operation in 1994, but its formal elimination would require Charter revisions.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), discussed in detail in Chapter 7, is the other major organ of the UN. It has 15 judges, elected by majority vote in the General Assembly and Security Council. It has noncompulsory jurisdiction, but in some cases, states have agreed to ICJ jurisdiction to rule on disputes. As with the other UN organs, its power and importance have varied over time.

Key Political Issues

The United Nations has always reflected what is happening in the world, and, in turn, the United Nations and its organs have shaped the world. The United Nations played a key role in the decolonization of Africa and Asia. The UN Charter endorsed the principle of self-determination for colonial peoples, and former colonies such as India, Egypt, Indonesia, and the Latin American states seized on the United Nations as a forum in which to push the agenda of decolonization. By 1960, a majority of the United Nations' members favored decolonization. General Assembly resolutions condemned the continuation of colonial rule and called for annual reports on the progress toward independence of all remaining territories. The United Nations was instrumental in the legitimation of the new international norm that colonialism and imperialism are unacceptable state policies. By the mid-1960s, most former colonies had achieved independence with little threat to international peace.

The emergence of the newly independent states transformed the United Nations and international politics more generally. These states formed a coalition of the Global South, or Group of 77, whose interests in economic development have often been at loggerheads with the developed countries of the North. The North-South conflict continues to be a central feature of world politics and of the United Nations, although the coalitions have become more fluid with the rise of new regional economic and political powers.

Peacekeeping

Of the many issues the United Nations confronts, none is as vexing as peace and security. A new approach, labeled peacekeeping, evolved as a way to limit the scope of conflict

and prevent it from escalating into a conflict between great powers. Peacekeeping operations fall into two types, or two generations. Traditional peacekeeping characterizes much of the UN's early peacekeeping missions. In traditional peacekeeping, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations seek to contain conflicts between two states through third-party military forces. Ad hoc military units, drawn from the armed forces of UN states that are not permanent members of the UN Security Council (often small, neutral members), have been used to prevent the escalation of conflicts and to keep the warring parties apart until the dispute can be settled. Invited in by the disputants, the troops operate under UN auspices, supervising armistices, trying to maintain ceasefires, and physically interposing themselves in a buffer zone between warring parties.

For example, following the 1956 conflict between Egypt and Israel (along with the United Kingdom and France), the First UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) was deployed under UN General Assembly Resolution 1001 to the Suez Canal and Sinai Peninsula. The mandate was to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of armed forces from those Egyptian territories, and then to serve as a buffer between the Egyptian and Israeli forces and provide impartial supervision of the ceasefire. Military personnel for the mission were provided by Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, Sweden, and Yugoslavia. Since that first traditional peacekeeping mission, missions have been deployed across the world including the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP, established in 1964) and the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE, established in 2000).

Whereas traditional peacekeeping activities primarily address interstate conflict, in the post–Cold War era UN peacekeeping has expanded to address different types of conflicts and to take on new responsibilities. Complex (or multidimensional) peacekeeping activities respond to civil war and ethnonationalist conflicts within states. And in some cases the UN has not been invited in by the established authorities. To deal with these new conflicts, peacekeepers have taken on a

range of both military and nonmilitary functions. On the military side, they have aided in the verification of troop withdrawal (the Soviet Union from Afghanistan) and have separated warring factions until the underlying issues could be settled (Bosnia). Sometimes, resolving underlying issues has meant organizing and running national elections, as in Cambodia, Namibia, and Afghanistan; sometimes, it has involved implementing human rights agreements, as in Central America. At other times, UN peacekeepers have engaged in what is often referred to as peacebuilding—working to maintain law and order in failing or disintegrating societies by aiding in civil administration, policing, and rehabilitating infrastructure, as in Somalia, East Timor, and Afghanistan. And peacekeepers have provided humanitarian aid, supplying food, medicine, and a secure environment as part of an expanded conception of human security in Africa, most recently in Somali, Mali, and South Sudan.

Complex peacekeeping has had successes and failures, as illustrated by Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Sahel. Namibia (formerly SouthWest Africa), a former German colony, was administered by South Africa following the end of World War I. Over the years, pressure was exerted on South Africa to relinquish control of the territory, but as long as Soviet-backed Cuban troops occupied neighboring Angola, South Africa refused to consider a change, citing security concerns. Finally, in 1988, Cuba and Angola agreed to withdraw Cuban troops as part of a regional peace settlement that included Namibian independence. The UN peacekeeping operation supervised the ceasefire, monitored the withdrawal of South African forces, supervised the civilian police force, secured the repeal of discriminatory legislation, and created conditions for free and fair elections. The UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia became the model for UN complex peacekeeping and nation building in Cambodia in the early 1990s and in East Timor in the late 1990s.

But not all UN peacekeeping operations have been successful. Rwanda is an example of a situation wherein a limited UN peacekeeping force proved to be insufficient and genocide

subsequently escalated as the international community watched and did nothing. Rwanda and neighboring Burundi have seen periodic outbreaks of devastating ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis since the 1960s. In the 1990s, intermittent fighting once again broke out. A 1993 peace agreement called for a UN force (the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, or UNAMIR) to monitor the ceasefire. Yet less than a year later, large-scale violence erupted following the death of the Rwandan president in a plane crash, with Hutu extremists in the Rwandan military and police slaughtering minority Tutsis, resulting in 750,000 Tutsi deaths in a ten-week period. UNAMIR was not equipped to handle the crisis, and despite its commander's call for more troops, the UN Security Council failed to respond until it was too late. Although UNAMIR did establish a humanitarian protection zone and provided security for relief-supply depots and escorts for aid convoys, peacekeeping failed disastrously.

The UN's response to the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, has also proven problematic. When in 2003 thousands of people fled their villages to escape attacks from the government-based Arab militias (the Janjaweed), the UN system and NGOs responded with humanitarian aid, setting up refugee camps and providing emergency food and health care. The Security Council, however, issued only weak warnings to Sudan since both China and Russia opposed coercive measures, despite evidence that Darfur was witnessing a genocide. Between 2003 and 2008, estimates report that more than 300,000 were killed, 2.5 million were displaced within the country, and another 250,000 fled to neighboring Chad. In 2007, a stronger joint UN/African Union hybrid peacekeeping force (UNAMID) was deployed, just as the crisis became more complex, with the number of factions increasing. By 2012, the worst of the mass killings had eased: the situation in Darfur stabilized; the Sudan-Chad border was relatively secure; and many, but not all, of the 100,000 refugees returned to an increasingly urbanized Darfur (see Chapter 12). UNAMID remained to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian aid, and nurture the peace process, although low levels of violence continued and the Sudanese military opposed its action. With the ouster of Omar al-Bashir, and a transition government in

Sudan, a new comprehensive security arrangement was negotiated in 2020, with Sudan pledging $750 million annually for peace and development in Darfur. UNAMID is due to be replaced by a UN-backed transition mission.

The UN has undertaken more than 70 peacekeeping missions since 1946. Here, UN peacekeepers monitor peace in the Abyei area on the border of Sudan and South Sudan.

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Most problematic has been the UN's complex peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, described as "Africa's first world war," introduced in Chapter 6. The UN was faced with a multidimensional crisis: an internationalized civil war with multiple belligerents; long-standing local conflicts over land, resources, and political power; continuous violence; and humanitarian crises all occurring within a weak and failing state. Between 1998 and 2009, despite the presence of the largest UN forces ever mounted, an overall strategy never developed, impeded by conflicting strategic interests of key member states. The logistical and operational difficulties were enormous, including the lack of transportation infrastructure, the inability to protect the civilian population, the lack of preparedness of UN troops, and the difficulty in managing the behavior of the UN troops who, themselves, were accused of sex crimes and corruption. This operation tarnished the UN's reputation, leading many to wonder whether, in the absence of the will and resources for a robust operation, it is perhaps better to refrain from any operation than to undertake a weak operation.9

The Sahel region of Africa is proving an even more complicated environment for peacekeeping operations. The region includes Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad, all among the world's poorest countries, each with diverse ethnic groups competing over scarce land and resources, and a history of poor governance. Since 2012, separatists in the northern parts of these countries, fueled by arms from abroad, have joined with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) and Islamic State (IS) supporters following its collapse in Syria and Iraq. These groups have financed their activities by

trafficking in drugs and migrants, kidnapping Westerners for ransom, and other crimes. As mentioned in Chapter 6, some of these groups are fighting for local causes or against corrupt governments, while others are confirmed Islamic jihadists.

In 2013, along with both the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the G5 regional partner states, the UN Security Council under Chapter VII authorized the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to protect civilians. France, the former colonial power in the region, was authorized to use all means to support MINUSMA. With U.S. financial and logistical support, France's troops have taken military action against the affiliates of Al Qaeda and the IS. However, the UN has generally not been involved in these counterterrorism activities, as it lacks equipment, intelligence, and logistic capabilities. MINUSMA and other operations in the region illustrate the difficulty of mounting an operation meant to protect the government against insurgents or aggressors, including engaging in offensive operations, while also trying to protect civilians. The UN cannot simultaneously neutralize some nonstate actors and protect civilians while using force only selectively.

Because of the Congo quagmire and, more recently, troublesome UN operations in Mali and other areas of the Sahel, significant concerns are being raised about the line between peacekeeping and enforcement. Does the UN's targeting of "an enemy" substantially reduce its impartiality and undermine its legitimacy? Does the mandate to conduct war against Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the authorization to stop the ethnic cleansing of Christian groups by Muslims in the Central African Republic, amount to a "doctrinal change" within the UN?10 With these actions, how can the UN be considered a neutral party requiring some level of consent by authorities? As UN missions shift over time, sometimes even over the span of the same operation, the task of evaluating success and failure becomes even more problematic. We turn to that task below.

Enforcement and Chapter VII

Since the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has intervened in situations deemed threatening to international peace and security, as authorized in Chapter VII of the UN Charter. That provision enables the Security Council to take enforcement measures (economic sanctions, direct military force) to prevent or deter threats to international peace or to counter acts of aggression. The council had invoked Chapter VII only twice before the 1990s because conflict between the Security Council members meant that the UN could muster support only for the more limited, traditional peacekeeping route.

But in 1990, the Security Council was able to act. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, both sanctions and military force were used to enforce international rules regarding international peace and security. Following the invasion, the Security Council invoked Chapter VII, condemning the invasion and demanding withdrawal. First, a series of sanctions were imposed on goods and transport. In November, the Security Council passed Resolution 678, which empowered states to use "all necessary means" to force Iraq out of Kuwait if it did not withdraw by January 15, 1991. When it did not, a multinational coalition of forces led by the United States staged an offensive against Iraq, which resulted in a February 28 ceasefire when Iraqi forces were on the brink of collapse. A year after the ceasefire was concluded, comprehensive sanctions were invoked, designed to dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The disarmament provisions were overseen by the UN Special Commission for the Disarmament of Iraq and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), one of the United Nations' specialized agencies.

While military force has been employed, as in the Iraq case, economic sanctions are the tool the Security Council has most often used in peace enforcement. For most of the 1990s, the UN-imposed sanctions grew more targeted; the most common of these was arms embargos. But they also included diplomatic sanctions (suspending membership in IGOs), financial sanctions (freezing of assets, investment bans), travel bans, and commodity sanctions.

UN sanctions are still an important tactic used to help protect international peace and security today. At the end of 2020, the Security Council was operating 14 sanctions programs through Chapter VII. The implementation of UN sanctions is monitored by sanctions committees composed of both council members and an independent panel of experts. Sanctions apply to particular countries for armed conflict or serious humanitarian crises, as well as to nonstate actors like the Taliban, the IS, and Al Qaeda. Despite efforts to frame sanctions carefully, they continue to have unintended consequences. Sanctions against Syria and North Korea, for example, have led to their own humanitarian crises as medicine and food have difficulty reaching their intended recipients.11 The question that these various UN actions raise is this: are they effective?

Peacekeeping and Enforcement: Success or Failure?

What defines success in peacekeeping and enforcement? The end of fighting? The end of a humanitarian crisis? A peace agreement? For how long does the success have to last? Two years, five, or more? Does success include holding free elections? Establishing a viable record of human rights and achieving economic development? And who defines success? The local population, who may define success as being able to return home? The belligerents, who may be negotiating a ceasefire? The individuals serving in international peacekeeping troops, who want to return home to their own countries? Or does the UN secretary-general, who wants to achieve the mission's stated mandates, define success? Clearly, various stakeholders have different standards for evaluating success.12

Many have worked to understand the success of UN peacekeeping missions. Case studies of specific conflicts tend to show that traditional peacekeeping has been successful. The Cyprus peacekeeping mission prevented overt hostilities between Greeks and Turks on the island. For 11 years, the Arab and Israeli states were kept apart, and India-Pakistan hostilities over Kashmir were contained to intermittent intervals, thanks in large part to traditional peacekeeping

operations. Unfortunately, in all three situations, traditional peacekeeping alone could not solve the underlying conflict.

Scholarly studies using empirical data from multiple cases confirm that multidimensional complex operations have reduced the risk of war from the immediate conflict by half. The risk of another war occurring within five years ranged from 23 to 43 percent. But enforcement actions under Chapter VII have been associated with unstable peace. There is a disturbing rate of conflict recurrence, estimated at between 20 percent and 56 percent for all civil conflicts.13 When those complex operations involved verification of arms, monitoring, or election supervision, they were more successful. But, in the most difficult conflicts, with a long history of violence and multiple belligerents, peacekeeping and peacebuilding have been less successful, as the Democratic Republic of Congo case illustrates. While these studies suggest peace operations are generally effective, they do not identify the factors that cause success or failure.14

The effectiveness of sanctions can also be difficult to evaluate. Is it primarily sanctions, or something else, that induce compliance? In a globalized system, for sanctions to be successful, they clearly need to be multilateral and tailored to the situation. Success is higher when the goal is modest policy changes or to constrain an actor. Sanctions that aim to coerce or promote regime change are less likely to be successful. While arms embargoes are the least effective, commodity sanctions have been more successful.15 But as several scholars remind us, “Smart [targeted] sanctions may satisfy the need in sender states to ‘do something.’ … But they are not a magic bullet for achieving foreign policy goals.”16

The role of the UN Security Council in peace enforcement, overall, has also come into question, as enforcement actions are often taken without Security Council authorization. For example, in 2002, the United States went to the Security Council seeking Chapter VII enforcement measures authorizing military action against Iraq. In this case, the United States argued that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations under previous UN resolutions by pursuing weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council was

divided, with the United States and Great Britain supporting enforcement and France, Russia, and China opposing the action. When the stalemate solidified, the United States chose not to return to the Security Council to seek formal authorization for the use of force. Thus, the military actions taken by the U.S.-led coalition in the 2003 Iraq War were not authorized by the United Nations. When a major power like the United States chooses to act without UN authorization, the legitimacy of the organization is undermined.

Overall, UN activities, be they undertaken on the whole range of issues including economic and social development or Chapter VII military or economic enforcement, are increasingly carried out in conjunction with others: state participation is critical as they supply personnel and funds. IGOs both within and without the UN system as well as nonstate actors like NGOs and the private sector are all involved. Evaluating effectiveness becomes all the more difficult when multiple objectives and many actors are involved.

UN Reform: Success and Stalemate

The UN has instituted reforms over the years to make its actions more effective. Since amending the Charter is difficult —requiring ratification of two-thirds of the members, including all five permanent members of the Security Council —the UN has undertaken most reforms without actually amending the Charter. New financial accountability mechanisms and internal oversight have been established. New structures have been created, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the CounterTerrorism Committee, while others have been expanded and reorganized, like the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. Since 2006, the new Peacebuilding Commission has addressed post-conflict recovery issues, including monitoring economic stabilization, building government capacity, and coordinating economic-development activities by meeting with the heads of UN programs and agencies, as well as with representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESInternational Organizations: A View from Japan

As a member of the Axis powers in World War II, Japan was not present at the creation of the postwar institutions, as only "peace-loving" states were permitted under the United Nations Charter. A decade later, in 1956, Japan joined the organization. Since then, Japan has played an active role in international and regional organizations, using its power as the world's third largest economy to promote issues congruent with its national interests.

During the early years of Japan's UN membership, Japan kept a low profile, supporting its ally the United States in keeping the People's Republic of China out of the organization and showing only general support for UN actions. In the 1970s, however, Japan quite abruptly shifted its position in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Joining with both less-developed states and Middle Eastern states, Japan began to advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people, promote the Palestine Liberation Organization in the UN, and support other causes in support of the Arab people. These positions reflected Japanese recognition of its resource vulnerability, since Japan's economic growth could only be sustained if it had guaranteed access to Middle Eastern petroleum. The UN was but one forum among several in which Japan supported the Middle Eastern oil producers.

Japan was asked to make a significant monetary contribution to the 1991 Gulf War effort—a war authorized by the United Nations Security Council of which it was not a member and about which it had never been consulted. The pressure to provide funds for the Gulf War stimulated a contentious debate in Japan around Article 9 of Japan's pacifist constitution.

According to Article 9, the "Japanese people forever renounce war as the sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." Additionally, "[l]and, sea, air forces as well as other war potential will never be maintained." At the time, Japan's security was provided for in a bilateral treaty with the United States. In 1954, Japan

formed its Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Most scholars believed the constitution thus prohibited the Japanese invasion of other countries while permitting defense of the homeland. But the constitutionality of the SDF and that interpretation were never affirmed.

In 1992, after much discussion, the Japanese Diet approved the Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping and Other Operations Law, permitting up to 2,000 Japanese troops to be deployed in UN peacekeeping missions under limited conditions. They joined the UN operation in Cambodia, which set the precedent for subsequent Japanese participation in other UN operations in Mozambique, East Timor, Haiti, and South Sudan. But the conditions for the deployment of SDF troops were limited to when force was not expected to be used, when both the UN and host countries consented, and with limited use of weapons, such as in humanitarian and medical operations. That represented a key step toward Japan's full contribution to the UN.

Japan has become the third largest contributor to the UN 12 percent. It is a major financial contributor to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, and the second largest donor of foreign aid. Japan has successfully placed its nationals in leadership positions in UN agencies including UNHCR and WHO and has lobbied for a seat on the Security Council.

Japan has played an increasing role in regional institutions as well. Japan exercises strong influence in the Asian Development Bank, where a Japanese national is always the president and where Japan and the United States each exercise the largest voting shares. Japan, along with Australia, was instrumental in the creation of APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum in the 1990s. And more than 20 years later, Japan was a strong proponent of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and, following the withdrawal of the United States, has stepped into a leadership role in the successor agreement.

Japan's shift to a stronger regional role can be explained by several factors: a reassertion of Japan's state identity and its desire to be what it refers to as a "normal power," the need to

reassure Asian countries about Japan's activism given its past aggression, and a recognition that Japan, in cooperation with the United States, must be considered a counterweight to growing Chinese influence in the region.

Though Japan was restricted from keeping a standing army after World War II, Article 9 of the Japanese constitution allows for the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to respond to foreign aggression. Former prime minister Shinzo Abe had pledged to advocate for a revision to Article 9 that would permit the SDF to engage in collective self-defense, before stepping down in 2020.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

History plays an important role in explaining Japan's participation in international organizations. Provide evidence.

Japan seeks a greater voice in the United Nations Security Council. Why should Japan be given greater power? Why should that role be circumscribed?

Japan wishes to become a "normal power." What do you think that means?

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Security Council reform is a persistent reform issue. The five permanent members of the council, the victors of World War II that possess veto power over substantive issues, are an anachronism. Europe is overrepresented, China is the only emerging economy and the only member from Asia, and both Germany and Japan contribute more financially to the organization than the four permanent members other than the United States. Virtually all agree that membership should be increased. But agreement ends there. What other countries should be admitted? Germany, Japan, and/or Italy? India, Pakistan, South Africa, and/or Nigeria from the developing world? Argentina or Brazil? Should the new members have the veto? Should the differentiation between permanent and nonpermanent membership be maintained? Proposals are debated, but no agreement is likely.

Troubling operational and management issues also persist.17 Illegal and immoral activities of UN peacekeepers tarnish the UN's reputation. Evidence of sexual child abuse and prostitution has been confirmed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of South Sudan, where peacekeepers exchange food or money for sexual favors. The problem continues even though the UN operations have included female peacekeepers. Inadequate sanitation of UN facilities during the Haiti intervention led to the cholera epidemic in 2010, leading to 700,000 cases and the deaths of at least 9,500 people. Although the UN apologized in 2016, the organization has not been able to raise sufficient funds for compensation. And allegations of financial mismanagement continue. The worst scandal involved the Oil-for-Food Programme, in which $1.8 billion was diverted by UN bureaucrats and contractors to Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime. The continuing revelations of such improprieties clearly diminish the UN's reputation and make reforms all the more urgent.

Real reform may well depend on the positions adopted by the UN's largest funder, the United States. During the Trump administration, the UN was pushed into making a number of budget cuts. At the end of 2017, the General Assembly agreed to a 5 percent spending cut in its biennial budget; this followed another cut earlier in the year of 7.5 percent in the peacekeeping operations budget. In the same year, the Trump administration announced both the withdrawal of $65 million in promised funds for the UN Relief and Works Agency—an organization aiding Palestinian refugees—and the U.S withdrawal from UNESCO (the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). In 2020, it announced the U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization, discussed in Chapter 12. These actions, along with threats to withdraw from the World Trade Organization and the Universal Postal Union and to withdraw support from UN human rights initiatives (see Chapter 10), were an integral part of the Trump administration's strategy to undo U.S. multilateral obligations to IGOs in general and to UNrelated organizations in particular. This was not the first time in the history of the United Nations that the United States has been an

uncooperative and sometimes obstructionist member, but the breadth of attacks against the principle of multilateralism and international organizations by the United States is without precedent. As the Biden administration reestablishes the United States' commitment to the United Nations and multilateral principles, rejoining WHO and announcing its intention to compete for a seat in the UN Human Rights Council, members of international organizations may be skeptical of this commitment given the policy shifts between presidential administrations.

A Complex Network of IGOs

The 19 specialized agencies formally affiliated with the United Nations work to further the UN mission. Each organization reflects functionalist thinking, as it is dedicated to specialized areas of activity that individual states cannot manage alone, be it public health and disease, the weather, the mail, or air transport. Such activities crossing national borders require monitoring by specialized experts across states as well as technical rules to govern them. Given the importance of these functional activities, it is not surprising that many of the specialized UN agencies actually predate the United Nations itself. The International Telecommunication Union dates from 1865, the Universal Postal Union from 1874, and international sanitary conferences from the middle of the nineteenth century. Others, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization, date from immediately after World War II.

Other specialized UN agencies and UN programs perform specific operational tasks: delivering food to those in need (World Food Programme), settling refugees and internally displaced people (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), or establishing labor standards (International Labour Organization). Many tasks these programs and agencies perform began under the auspices of the League of Nations. These organizations have separate charters, memberships, budgets, and secretariats. Although each reports directly or indirectly to the UN's Economic and Social Council, none can be instructed by it or by the General Assembly. Other specialized agencies include the Bretton Woods institutions—

the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—examined in Chapter 8.

The United Nations is not the only important IGO, of course. Numerous other intergovernmental organizations are not affiliated with the United Nations. These IGOs perform critical functions taking on new tasks. And they, like the plethora of regional and subregional organizations, often work in tandem with states and members of the UN family of organizations (see Table 9.2). They, too, are always changing and responding to new realities, perhaps none more so than the European Union.

TABLE 9.2

Representative International and Regional Organizations

UN SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS

World Health Organization

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

Food and Agriculture Organization

World Trade Organization

International Labour Organization

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

International Atomic Energy Agency

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

World Bank Group

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

European Union

European Free Trade Association

African Union

Economic Community of West African States

Organization of American States

Mercosur

Arab League

Gulf Cooperation Council

The European Union—Organizing Regionally

Regional organizations also play an increasingly important role in international relations. But none has been as visible, as strong, or as copied as the European Union (EU). The idea of a united Europe goes back centuries. Both Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau presented plans on how to unite Europe.18 The two world wars gave that goal new life. After World War II, vigorous debate ensued over the future organization of Europe. On one side of the debate were the federalists: drawing on the writings of Rousseau, they believed that because sovereign states instigated wars, peace was possible only if states gave up their sovereignty and invested in a federal body. States eventually could eliminate military competition if they joined with other states, each one surrendering some pieces of sovereignty.

On the other side of the debate were the functionalists. Their principal proponent, Jean Monnet, believed that the forces of nationalism could be undermined by the logic of functional economic integration beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community, a project that would spill over eventually from the economic arena to issues of national security. The federalist-proposed European Defense Community was defeated by the French Parliament in 1954, and the functionalists who argued for starting in economic affairs prevailed. No one at the time could have envisioned a union that in 2021 would bring together more than 450 million citizens in 27 countries, many of them able to travel freely with a burgundy EU passport. Nor could anyone have imagined the union enjoying an economy as much as 15 percent of the world's GDP and 19 of its countries using a common currency, the euro.

Historical Evolution

The impetus for the creation of the European Union grew not only from the devastation of the wartime experience but also from the security threat that remained. Urged on by the United States, an economically strong Europe knew it would be better equipped to counter the Soviet threat if it integrated. Europe also understood that if the Germans were enmeshed in such agreements, they would pose a lesser threat to other states. Of course, U.S.-based multinational corporations would also benefit from an expanded market. Thus, security threats, economic incentives, and a postwar vision all played a role in the drive of political elites for European integration.19

The European Coal and Steel Community was the first step toward realizing this idea. It was made up of West Germany, France, Italy, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and placed French and (West) German coal and steel production under a common "High Authority." West Germany was treated as an equal, and its key economic sector supporting the arms industry was brought into a community with the other five states. This functionalist experiment was so successful in boosting coal and steel production that the member states agreed to expand cooperation under the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community. Thus, the Treaties of Rome, signed in 1957, committed the six states to create a common market—removing restrictions on internal trade; imposing a common external tariff; reducing barriers to the movement of people, services, and capital; and establishing a common agricultural and transport policy. By 1968, two years ahead of schedule, most of these goals had been achieved.

New policy areas were gradually brought under the umbrella of the community. As success in one area waxed and waned, and economic stagnation hindered progress, action was taken. The first initiative was expanding the size of the community in the so-called widening process. Successive enlargements followed, resulting in a 27-state membership by 2021, along with multiple candidate and potential candidate states seeking entry. The map below shows how EU membership has changed over the course of the organization's history. The

widening process has increased the organization's influence but also complicated its decision making.

Expansion of the European Union, 1952–2021

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The most important step in the deepening process of EU integration—expanding the institution to ever-greater levels of cooperation—was taken in 1986 with the signing of the Single European Act (SEA). The established goal was to complete a single market by the end of 1992. Achieving this goal meant a complicated process of removing the remaining physical, fiscal, and technical barriers to trade; harmonizing national standards of health; varying levels of taxation; and eliminating the barriers to movement of peoples. The process also addressed new environmental and technological issues. Three thousand specific measures were needed to complete the single market.

Even before that process was completed, the Maastricht Treaty was signed in 1992. The European Community became the European Union (EU). Members committed themselves not only to an economic union but also to a political one, including the establishment of common foreign and defense policies, a single currency, and a regional central bank. Five years later, in 1997, the Amsterdam Treaty was signed, which granted more power to the European Parliament—a body directly elected by EU citizens—and put more emphasis on the rights of individuals, citizenship, justice, and home affairs.

The increased power of the EU has not been without its opponents. While support for economic and political cooperation is strong, some in the public fear the reduction of national sovereignty and placing more power in the hands of bureaucrats. The debate over the proposed European Constitution brought that issue to a head. Pushed forward by elites, the European Constitution was signed by the heads of state in 2004, only to be rejected in national referendums in France and the Netherlands a year later. In its stead, the Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007, becoming law in 2009. This treaty was another attempt to enhance the efficacy of the EU by creating the offices of president of the European Council

and High Representative for Foreign Affairs, increasing the use of qualified majority voting in place of unanimity, and improving the EU's democratic legitimacy by increasing the authority of the European Parliament. (See Table 9.4.)

Structure

The executive functions of the EU reside in the European Council and the European Commission. The European Council is composed of the heads of government of each of the EU member states. They come together four times a year and set the overarching policy agenda and priorities of the European Union. The European Commission is headed by commissioners—one from each member state. Each commissioner is responsible for specific policy areas and heads a bureaucracy charged with implementing policies on that topic. The bureaucrats in the European Commission, some 23,000 strong, are often called Eurocrats and do not answer to the governments of their states. They are there to represent the European interest—i.e., the interest of the community as a whole. The European Commission is responsible for initiating legislative proposals and implementing EU policies. Table 9.3 provides the basic information about the EU's decision-making bodies, membership, voting, and responsibilities.

TABLE 9.3

Principal Institutions of the European Union, 2021

INSTITUTION

MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING

RESPONSIBILITIES

European Council

Heads of government; Commission president; High Representative for Foreign Affairs; summit meetings quarterly; elects president to represent EU to world

Defines policy agenda and priorities

European Commission

27 members; four-year terms, approved by member states; plus 23,000 support staff (Eurocrats)

Initiates proposals; guards treaties; executes policies; responsible for common policies

Council of the European Union

Ministers of member states; unanimity or qualified majority voting depending on issue

Legislates; sets political objectives; coordinates; resolves differences

European Parliament

705 members, elected for five years by voters in member states; allocated by size of population; organized around political parties

Legislates; approves budget and the laws with the Council of Ministers

Court of Justice of the European Union

Includes Court of Justice (judges) appointed by states for six-year terms; General Court

Adjudicates disputes over EU treaties; ensures uniform interpretation of EU laws; renders preliminary opinions to states

The European Parliament and Council of the European Union (also sometimes called the Council of Ministers or just the Council, which is a separate institution from the European Council) perform the legislative functions of the EU. The Council is composed of the ministers from the government of each member state in the issue area under consideration (e.g., the agriculture minister for agricultural issues and the environment minister for environmental issues). The Council makes decisions using a qualified majority system in which each member is given a certain number of votes, weighted by size and population. A positive vote requires 55 percent of the member states (15 states), representing 65 percent of the EU's total population. To block a decision, four states must concur, representing 35 percent of the total EU population. A few policy decisions in foreign and security affairs, immigration, and taxation may require unanimous support of the Council.

The European Parliament co-legislates with the Council. Both institutions must agree for EU legislation (including the budget) to pass. The parliament is unique in that its members are elected directly by EU citizens in each state every five years. It is designed to provide some democratic accountability in the EU. In 2014, turnout for the European Parliament's election was 43 percent and in 2019, it was 50.6 percent. That election showed increased polarization in the body, with victories by both more pro-EU liberal supporters and by Euroskeptics of the right. There was a decrease in support of the political center but an increase among the green parties and higher levels of public engagement than at any other time.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) is the judicial branch of the EU, made up of the Court of Justice and the General Court. The CJEU has wide-ranging responsibilities for interpreting and enforcing EU law. Its functions include ruling on the constitutionality of EU law, interpreting the EU treaties, ensuring that EU law is followed by the member states and applied across them in the same way, settling disputes, and providing advisory opinions to national courts for ruling on cases within their own national jurisdiction. Member states, the European Commission, corporations, and individuals can all file complaints with the CJEU. The Court of Justice has a very heavy case load—it hears over 900 cases annually, although it completes fewer. Generally, three to five judges hear any one case, depending on its complexity.

Through infringement proceedings, the court is tasked with ensuring that the EU member states and EU institutions abide by EU law. If a member state is found out of compliance with EU law (which all states are obligated to follow), the CJEU can authorize the European Commission to fine or to impose sanctions on the noncompliant state. The founders did not anticipate the significant power that the judicial branch would eventually hold through the delegation of these various functions. Virtually every member state has been brought before the court at some point for failing to fulfill its obligations. Disputes have involved a diverse set of topics such as customs duties, tax discrimination, elimination of

nontariff barriers, agricultural subsidies, environmental law, consumer safety issues, and mobility of labor. Overall, the Court of Justice plays a major role in solidifying European regionalism by enforcing EU law.

Some states of the EU have also given up their national currency and adopted the euro. For these states, the European Central Bank (ECB) is a central institution. It has a president and vice president and is made up of the governors of the central banks of the member states. Its role is to manage the euro and implement EU monetary policy. Like the U.S. Federal Reserve does for the U.S. dollar, the ECB sets the interest rate at which it lends to commercial banks in the Eurozone, thus controlling the euro's money supply and inflation. It also manages the Eurozone's foreign currency reserves and the buying or selling of currencies to control exchange rates. The countries of the Eurozone have thus delegated their power over monetary policy and exchange rate policy to the ECB.

Policies and Problems

Consistent with functionalist thinking, the EU has moved progressively into more and more policy areas. From its beginnings focusing on production and trade of coal and steel, the EU now has competence in issue areas including international trade, agriculture and fisheries, competition policy, the movement of peoples, immigration, the environment, justice, and home affairs, among many others. In many of these issue areas, the EU sets the standards for countries worldwide that want access into the EU markets.20 In addition, there is now citizenship in the EU and many EU member states share a common currency. Table 9.4 lays out major developments in the evolution of the EU.

While there are many EU policy successes over the years, there are also several problem areas. First, the functionalist aspiration that the EU would eventually be able to forge common foreign and security policy has proven difficult since unanimity is required for decisions in that issue area. While there is an attempt to create a common foreign and security policy and the Treaty of Lisbon created an EU High

Representative for Foreign Affairs, on several major foreign policy issues members of the EU have been split, preventing a united EU front. During the 2003 Iraq War, Great Britain, Spain, and Poland strongly supported the United States, sending in their military, while Germany and France opposed the policy, mainly because the UN Security Council had not authorized military force.

After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, European Union leaders again were divided over punishing Russia. Great Britain's prime minister, David Cameron, called for tough new sanctions to punish Russia, while Germany's Angela Merkel argued that Russia would have to send its military into eastern Ukraine to trigger stronger measures. Britain, Sweden, and East European members pushed for halting arms sales to Russia; France opposed the measure. Differences in the countries' positions tend to reflect economic ties—for instance, France has military contracts with Russia, and Germany and Italy depend on imports of Russian gas and oil, all of which would be jeopardized by sanctions.

While the record of unity on foreign policy is relatively weak, the EU did participate in the Iran nuclear negotiations in which the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs played a major role in negotiating the agreement. And that unity persists on the issue of Iran despite the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement and its attempts during the Trump administration to get Europeans to reimpose sanctions. On the issue of Belarus where the government held a corrupt election in 2020 and demonstrators were jailed and beaten, the EU at first failed to forge a united front, but it finally agreed to impose sanctions against key Belarusian politicians and offered financial assistance to civil society and the independent media.

TABLE 9.4

Significant Events in the Development of the European Union

YEAR

EVENT

1952

European Coal and Steel Community created by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and West Germany.

1957

Treaties of Rome establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community, comprising same six members.

1968

Customs Union is completed; all internal customs, duties, and quotas are removed; and common external tariff is established.

1979

High-level negotiations on European Monetary System are completed; first direct elections to the European Parliament.

1986

Signing of the Single European Act designed to ensure faster decisions; more attention to environmental and technological issues.

1992

Maastricht Treaty completed, committing members to political union, including the establishment of common foreign and defense policies, a single currency, and a regional central bank; name changed to European Union (EU).

1997

Treaty of Amsterdam extends EU competence on issues of justice and home affairs and defines European citizenship.

1999

Common monetary policy and single currency (the euro) launched.

2002

Euro in circulation.

2009

Lisbon Treaty authorizes institutional reforms.

2016

Great Britain votes to leave the EU.

2020

Great Britain leaves the EU.

Membership in the EU has always been a divisive issue. Despite multiple enlargements, many questions remain. Should the EU continue to expand its membership by reaching out to the newly democratic states of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union like Ukraine, or to those in need such as Iceland? How rapidly should any new members come to adhere to the 80,000 pages of EU law and regulations? How long should any new states wait until they receive the full benefits of EU membership like agricultural subsidies and free movement of labor? Can Turkey, the first candidate state with a majority-Muslim population, eventually meet the criteria for membership: stable democratic institutions, a functioning market, and a capacity to meet union obligations when its human rights record has been tarnished under President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an? Can EU institutions be effective as more members are added? Should the EU change its laws and expel members who no longer meet the democratic prerequisite of the EU?

The British public's vote to leave the EU in 2016, commonly referred to as Brexit, caused an earthquake in the EU and led many to question its future. Supporters of Britain's exit were disappointed with the economic and political rewards from membership. No longer were they content to be governed by faceless bureaucrats in EU institutions with its lack of transparency and accountability; they wanted a return to complete sovereignty. The only alternative was to withdraw and renegotiate new arrangements with Europe and the rest of the world. Britain's membership in the EU ended in December 2020, marking its exit from the single market and customs union, and leaving it to pursue separate trade deals with other countries.

Four years after Britain voted to end EU membership and after 11 months of negotiations, terms of the Brexit agreement were finally revealed in a 1,200 page "divorce" settlement in December 2020. On key economic provisions, both sides

agreed not to impose tariffs or quotas on goods crossing the borders. But customs declarations and safety checks at the borders will be implemented on the estimated $900 billion in cross-channel trade. No border checks will be in effect between North Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. EU fishers will still have fishing rights in British waters, albeit with a 25 percent reduction in quotas during a five-year transition period. Both sides agreed to fair competition and to maintaining common standards on workers' rights and on social, environmental, and tax transparency. When disputes occur between the United Kingdom and EU members, dispute settlement will occur through binding arbitration by an independent panel. Missing from the agreement, however, is the provision for treatment of the financial services sector in Great Britain, a sector representing 80 percent of the economy.

In addition, the United Kingdom is no longer bound by the decisions of the European Court of Justice, nor is it a member of EUROPOL or of Erasmus for student exchanges. UK nationals will now need visas for stays longer than 90 days in EU countries. And there is no automatic recognition of professional qualifications across states.

In the aftermath of Brexit, there is extended speculation on what Brexit means for international relations more generally. What role will Britain be able to now play internationally? Can Britain go global—at a time when globalization itself is under fire? What will Britain's exit mean for other European agreements like NATO? Will Russia and China enjoy greater leverage over a weakened EU? Will other countries want to negotiate a partial withdrawal or a total withdrawal? Political parties in both the far right and the radical left in the Netherlands, Italy, France, and Greece have each expressed the desire to withdraw. Is the EU an "endangered species"?

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 created another dynamic affecting the future of the EU. In the first few weeks of the pandemic each member state clearly pursued its own national interests—closing borders, hoarding its own supplies, and pointing fingers at bad actors. But the EU also closed its external borders, made joint purchases of equipment and drugs, and facilitated the repatriation of EU citizens. In July

2020, at a special meeting of the European Council, EU members were able to agree on a significant economic relief package to help address the fallout from the pandemic, as discussed in Chapter 8. As the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, argued of the quick and united response to the pandemic by EU member states, "[W]hat we have done is to renew our European marriage vows for the next 30 years. European unity has won through… . The message we are sending to the rest of the world is: Europe is here. Europe is strong. Europe is standing tall."21 But that optimism depends on the end of the pandemic and the renewal of the European economy, as well as the smooth functioning of the Brexit agreement.

Other Regional Organizations: The OAS, the AU, and the Arab League

For many years, the critical question was whether other regions would follow the European Union model. Clearly, others would be unlikely to duplicate precisely the circumstances surrounding the development of the European Union. And most Asian leaders think the European model is inappropriate for their region.

Two key regional organizations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Union (AU), have followed independent paths. At its establishment in 1948, the OAS adopted wide-ranging goals: political (promotion of democracy), economic (enhancement of development, preferential treatment in trade and finance), social (promotion of human rights), and military (collective defense against aggression from outside the region and peaceful settlement of disputes within). No other regional organization includes such a North-South split between a hegemonic member such as the United States (and Canada) on the one hand and a "southern constituency" on the other. With that division, the OAS has adopted many of the foreign policy concerns of the hegemon, such as the defeat of communist/leftist factions during the Cold War and an emphasis on democracy promotion.

In 1985, the OAS resolved to take action should an irregular interruption of democracy occur, declaring that a member

should be suspended if its government is overthrown by force. The OAS has acted against coups or countercoups in Haiti (1991–94), Peru (1992), Paraguay (1996, 2000), and Venezuela (1992, 2002), among others. It instituted sanctions against Haiti and, in 2009, suspended Honduras from membership after that country's coup, lifting the suspension in 2011.

But the organization was deadlocked over Venezuela and its president Nicolás Maduro's authoritarianism and economic mismanagement. Finally, in early 2019 the OAS Permanent Council, citing an illegitimate electoral process, agreed in a divided vote not to recognize the Maduro government. Instead, Juan Guaidó (speaker of the National Assembly) was recognized as the legitimate authority in the country. Consistent with that emphasis on electoral fairness, the OAS, in 2019 and 2020, launched investigations into elections in Guyana and Bolivia and sent election monitors to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Costa Rica.

The overall record in achieving its political, economic, and social goals is mixed, however, as the OAS has been constrained by a dearth of economic resources and political will. Unlike the EU, the OAS has played a limited role in economic development of the region. In recent years, the OAS has devoted more attention to transnational criminal threats like drugs, terrorism, money laundering, and human trafficking, as well as electoral fairness.

The African Union came about as a replacement for the Organization of African Unity in 2002, enhancing its capacity to respond to democratization and economic globalization. The AU began to speak out more forcefully on domestic politics in member countries, suspending illegitimate governments and adopting measures to strengthen monitoring of member states. Taking actions like suspending Mauritania from membership (2008), reversing a coup in the Comoros Islands (2008), establishing a caretaker government in Mali after a military coup (2012), suspending Burkina Faso following a coup (2014), and denouncing Mali's military coup (2020) is justified as consistent with the notion that better

governance is key to economic development and necessary for development funding by international donors.

The African Union's most ambitious undertaking is the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), authorized by the UN Security Council in 2007. In 2020, the mission had over 19,000 troops from neighboring states of Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. It has funding from the UN, the EU, and the United States. The goal of AMISOM is to strengthen Somalia's capacity to fight al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups and help to expand the government's ability to govern in areas within its territorial borders but over which the government is not currently in control.

However, following through on obligations and enforcement remains a problem for the AU. The same is true for many other regional organizations because funding is limited and commitment by donors inconsistent.

An example of an organization that has limited capacity to develop cohesive policies in a region riddled by internal disputes is the Arab League. Established in 1945, the league undertook only one action for many years: boycotting Israeli companies and goods. But because of internal disputes among members, the league could not coordinate on policy regarding the wars with Israel in 1948, 1967, or 1973; it stayed silent during the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza in 2014. In 2017, when Arab League members Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain broke off diplomatic relations with Qatar due to its alleged support for Islamists and its relationship with Iran, the Arab League's secretary-general was only able to express regret. In the aftermath of the 2020 peace arrangement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (the so-called Abraham Accord), the league has been eerily silent with major divisions among its membership.

Following the initial shock of the Arab Spring of 2011, the league did call out member states' behavior, taking the unprecedented step of suspending Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni membership; calling for multilateral action; and condemning the respective governments for their use of force.

However, in 2015, the league voiced support for Saudi Arabian military intervention in Yemen against the Shia Houthis and agreed in principle to form a joint military force, though that action was never taken. And the league did support the overthrow of Qaddafi in Libya.

Syria has proven a more complicated issue. Initially, the league suspended Syria's membership, but it then brokered a peace deal. When Syria did not comply, the league called for Assad to step down in 2012. League sanctions were imposed, including freezing assets and halting bank transfers. Eventually, the league recognized the Syrian opposition as the legitimate representative of the people. But by 2018, some league members called for Syria's readmission as it was apparent that Assad would maintain power. The league's stance here, interfering in the domestic affairs of a member state, represents a significant change from past policy.

As illustrated, the league, like many IGOs, struggles to coordinate a common approach; its members are divided by sectarian allegiances and power rivalries. Since the organization has no mechanism to compel compliance with resolutions taken, it often remains silent, preferring to remain, in the words of one critic, "a glorified debating society."22

In reality, today's IGOs seldom act alone. Often they carry out their activities through partnerships with the cooperation of other international or regional organizations, as well as with nonstate actors, including nongovernmental organizations.

Check Your Understanding

What comprises an intergovernmental organization? political leaders

businesses

states

wealthy individual donors

What is the biggest and most important international organization, comprised of such bodies as the General Assembly and the Security Council? the United Nations

the European Union

the League of Nations

the African Union

Glossary

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

international agencies or bodies established by states and controlled by member states that deal with areas of common interest

collective good

a public good that is available to all regardless of individual contribution—e.g., the air, the oceans, or Antarctica—that no one owns or is individually responsible for

Security Council

one of the major organs of the United Nations charged with the responsibility for peace and security issues; includes five permanent members with veto power and ten nonpermanent members chosen from the General Assembly

General Assembly

one of the major organs of the United Nations; generally addresses issues other than those of peace and security; each member state has one vote; operates with six functional committees composed of all member states

Group of 77

a coalition of about 125 developing countries that press for reforms in economic relations between developing and developed countries; also referred to as the South

traditional peacekeeping

the use of multilateral third-party military forces to achieve several different objectives: containing interstate conflict; enforcing ceasefires and separating military forces; used during the Cold War to prevent conflict among the great powers from escalating

complex (or multidimensional) peacekeeping

multidimensional operations using military and civilian personnel, often including traditional peacekeeping and nation-building activities; more dangerous because not all parties have consented and because force is usually used

peacebuilding

post-conflict political and economic activities designed to preserve and strengthen peace settlements; includes civil administration, elections, and economic development activities

European Union (EU)

a union of twenty-eight European states, formerly the European Economic Community; designed originally during the 1950s for economic integration, but since expanded into a closer political and economic union

Endnotes

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Note 03: Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst, “The United States and Multilateral Institutions: A Framework,” in The United States and Multilateral Institutions: Patterns of Changing Instrumentality and Influence, ed. Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 1–24. Return to reference 3

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NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Nongovernmental organizations are generally private, voluntary organizations whose members are individuals or associations that come together to achieve a common purpose, often, but not always, oriented to a public good. They are not

sovereign and do not have the same kinds of power resources as states. They are incredibly diverse entities, ranging from entirely local and/or grassroots organizations to those organized nationally and transnationally. Some are privately financed by individuals or groups. Others rely partially on government funds or aid in kind. Some are open to mass membership; others are closed-member groups or federations. These differences have led to an alphabet soup of acronyms specifying types of NGOs. These include GONGOs (government-organized NGOs), BINGOs (business and industry NGOs), and DONGOs (donor-organized NGOs), to name a few.

The number of NGOs has grown dramatically. While the vast majority of millions of NGOs are national NGOs, NGOs that are primarily international in their activities are far fewer. In 2020, the UN recognized 22,000 international NGOs, with over 4,000 having consultative status that gives them privileged access into the UN system.

The Growth of NGO Power and Influence

Although NGOs are not new actors in international politics, they are growing in importance.23 One of the earliest NGO-initiated efforts at transnational organization was dedicated to the abolition of slavery. These NGOs took the first steps in the nineteenth century by defining the practice as inhumane and unjust. NGOs organizing on behalf of peace and noncoercive methods of dispute settlement also appeared during the nineteenth century, as did environmental NGOs organizing to protect particular species. During the first half of the twentieth century, these same groups were instrumental in lobbying for a "league of nations" and the International Labour Organization. Subsequently, they supported the establishment of the United Nations and the related agencies protecting different groups of people, including refugees (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and women and children (UNICEF), among others. During the 1970s, as the number of NGOs grew, various groups formed networks and coalitions, and by the 1990s, these NGOs were able to mobilize the mass public effectively and influence international relations.

A number of factors explain the remarkable resurgence of NGO activity and their increased power as actors in international politics. First, the issues NGOs have seized on have been increasingly viewed as interdependent, or transnational—their solutions require transnational and intergovernmental cooperation. Pollution and ocean dumping during the 1970s and 1980s; and global warming, land mines, and the AIDS epidemic during the 1990s are examples of issues that require international action and that are "ripe" for NGO activity. Some have been increasingly viewed as human security issues, an argument many NGOs have promoted.

Second, global conferences became a key venue for international activity beginning in the 1970s; each was designed to address one of the transnational issues—the environment (1972, 1992, 2012), population (1974, 1984), women (1975, 1985, 1995), and food (1974, 1996, 2002). A pattern emerged when NGOs began to organize separate but parallel conferences on the same issues. These create opportunities for NGO representatives not only to network with each other and form coalitions on specific issues but also to lobby governments and international bureaucrats. In some cases, those linkages between the governmental and nongovernmental conferences enhance the power of the latter.

Third, the end of the Cold War and the expansion of democracy in the former communist world and developing countries have provided an unprecedented political opening for NGOs into parts of the world previously untouched by NGO activity. However, that trend appears to have waned, as recently states have been attempting to reassert their authority over international NGOs, as discussed below.

Finally, the communications revolution also partly explains the expanded role of NGOs. First fax technology, and then the Internet, including e-mail and social media, enabled NGOs to communicate with core constituencies, build coalitions with other like-minded groups, and generate mass support. Today, NGOs can disseminate information rapidly, recruit new members, launch publicity campaigns, and encourage individuals to participate. In particular, the rise of digital technologies enable supporters in different NGOs—not just

elites—to test and facilitate connections, providing quick feedback to various constituencies in new forms of networked power.24 NGOs benefit from these changes and are able to harness them to increase their own power.

Functions and Roles of NGOs

NGOs perform a variety of functions and roles in international relations. They advocate specific policies and offer alternative channels of political participation, as Amnesty International has done through its letter-writing campaigns on behalf of victims of human rights violations. They mobilize mass publics, as Greenpeace did in saving whales (through international laws limiting whaling) and in forcing the labeling of "green" (non–environmentally damaging) products in Europe and Canada. They distribute critical assistance in disaster relief and to refugees, as Catholic Relief Services and Oxfam have done in Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. And Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) has played a major role in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Ebola outbreaks, and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in rebuilding health infrastructure in conflict areas. NGOs are the principal monitors of human rights norms and environmental regulations, and they provide warnings of violations, as Human Rights Watch has done in China, Latin America, and elsewhere.

NGOs are also the primary actors at the grassroots level in mobilizing individuals to act. For example, during the 1990 meeting to revise the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, NGOs criticized the UN Environment Program secretary-general, Mostafa Tolba, for not advocating more stringent regulations on ozone-destroying chemicals. Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace International, and the Natural Resources Defense Council held press conferences and circulated brochures to the public, media, and officials complaining of the weak regulations, primarily using mainstream media. Occasionally, NGOs have chosen direct action—organizing demonstrations, disrupting actions of offending groups, and even breaking laws to make positions clear.

Nowhere has the impact of NGOs been felt more strongly than in the 1990s at the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED). They played key roles in both the preparatory conferences and the conference itself, adding representation and openness to the process. They made statements from the floor, drafted materials, reviewed working drafts, and offered specific phrasing. These activities paid off. Agenda 21, the official document produced by the conference, recognized the unique capabilities of NGOs and recommended their participation at all levels of the policy process. But in later conferences NGO participation has not been as effective. Neither NGOs nor some states were able to generate enough consensus to move the agenda ahead.

NGOs play unique roles at the national level. In a few unusual cases, NGOs take the place of states, either performing services that an inept or corrupt government is not providing or stepping in for a failed state. Bangladesh hosts one of the largest NGO sectors in the world, a response in part to that government's failure and the failure of the private for-profit sector to provide for the poor. Thus, NGOs have assumed responsibility in education, health, agriculture, and microcredit —originally all government functions. Likewise, Haiti hosts a large contingent of NGOs providing essential services.

By taking purposeful and public actions, NGOs can direct media attention to their cause, which in turn can create pressure on politicians to change policy. Here, Greenpeace activists highlight the environmental degradation of palm oil production in Indonesia.

*

Not surprisingly, some states have begun to crack down on NGOs. Between 2014 and 2016 alone, over 60 states have restricted civil society NGOs. Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have limited the actions of international NGOs, many of which called attention to government disrespect for human rights and corrupt electoral processes. Similarly, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Kenya have issued regulations that have weakened NGOs, decreased their funding, and limited

their programs. Kenya, where NGOs provide resources of an estimated $1.2 billion, has shuttered many NGOs in the name of national security, because they have allegedly raised funds for terrorism. And in Israel there has been a heated debate over the role of NGOs whose primary source of funding is the European Union and Western European governments. Most of those NGOs oppose the Israeli government's policies regarding the West Bank. The Israeli government claims that these NGOs play a too visible and powerful role on a contentious issue in Israeli politics.25

States' attempts to curb the power of NGOs have resulted in international NGOs changing how they operate: they have curbed their engagement in politically sensitive areas, reduced in-country international personnel, operated more remotely with new technologies, and built on the capacity of local funding partners.26 And they create multilevel linkages among different organizations, enhancing each other's power. These networks have learned from each other, just as constructivists would have predicted.

We usually associate NGOs with humanitarian and environmental groups working for a greater social, economic, or political good, but NGOs may also be formed for malevolent purposes—the Mafia, international drug cartels, and even Al Qaeda being prominent examples. The Mafia, traditionally based in Italy but with networks in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Americas, is engaged in numerous illegal business practices, including money laundering, tax evasion, and fraud. International drug cartels, many with origins in Colombia, function with suppliers in states such as Peru, Venezuela, Afghanistan, and Myanmar, while maintaining links with middlemen in Nigeria, Mexico, Guinea, and the Caribbean to deliver illegal drugs to North America and Europe. What these NGOs share is a loose series of networks across national boundaries that move illicit goods and services in international trade. Their leadership is dispersed and their targets are ever-changing, making their activities particularly difficult to contain.

The Power of NGOs

What gives NGOs the ability to play such diverse roles in the international system? What are their sources of power? Most NGOs rely on soft power, trying to persuade others to change their behavior without using coercion, as explained in Chapter 5. This requires NGOs to have certain resources and capabilities, including an independent donor base, links with grassroots groups that enable them to operate in different areas of the world, and the flexibility to move staff rapidly depending on need. This very flexibility enables them to create networks to increase their power potential and form coalitions to promote their respective agendas.

NGOs have distinct advantages over individuals, states, and intergovernmental organizations. They are usually politically independent from any sovereign state, so they can make and execute international policy more rapidly and directly than IGOs, and with less risk to national sensitivities. They can participate at all levels, from policy formation and decision making to implementation, if they choose. Yet they can also influence state behavior by initiating formal, legally binding action; pressuring authorities to impose sanctions; carrying out independent investigations; and linking issues together in ways that force some measure of compliance.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is an outstanding example of the power of an NGO network. Beginning in 1992, nine NGOs were eventually joined by more than 1,000 other NGOs and local groups in more than 60 countries. They used electronic media to frame the message that land mines are a human rights issue and have devastating effects on innocent civilians. Leaders formed a network, the Ottawa Process, bolstered by the death in 1997 of Diana, Princess of Wales, one of its vocal supporters. Jody Williams, a founder of the ICBL and the winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts, coordinated the process, and Canada's foreign minister pushed the issue, hosted the conference, and provided financial support. The Convention to Ban Landmines was ratified in 1999. But not every attempt to forge such networks has been successful, as illustrated by the failure of the movement to curb small arm sales. NGOs have limits.

The Limits of NGOs

NGOs often lack material forms of power. Except for some of the malevolent groups, they do not have military or police forces as governments do, and thus they cannot command obedience through physical means.

Most NGOs have very limited economic resources because they do not collect taxes, as states do. Thus, the competition for funding is fierce; NGOs that share the same concerns often compete for the same donors. They have a continuous need to raise money, leading some NGOs to find new causes to widen their donor base. To expand their resources, NGOs increasingly rely on governments, an alternative that comes with its own set of limitations. If NGOs choose to accept state assistance, then their neutrality and legitimacy are potentially compromised. They may be forced continually to report "success" to renew their financing, even though success may be difficult to prove or even be an inaccurate description of reality. In short, NGOs are locked in a competitive scramble for resources.27

Do most NGOs succeed in accomplishing their goals? This question is difficult to evaluate, because the NGO community is itself diverse; it has no single agenda, and NGOs often work at cross-purposes, just as states do. Groups can be found on almost any side of every issue, resulting in countervailing pressures. In a world that is increasingly viewed as democratic, are NGOs appropriate? To whom are NGOs accountable if their leaders are not elected? How do they maintain transparency when they have no publicly accountable mechanism?

Incomplete or unsatisfactory answers to these questions have led scholars to suggest that NGOs may be more like other actors and less altruistic than supposed—self-interested, self-aggrandizing, concerned with their own narrow agendas, hierarchical rather than democratic, more worried about financial gains than achieving progressive social purposes. This suggestion has led some critics to refer to NGOs as "wild cards" and "benign parasites."28 Some case studies have found that NGOs' actions have led to unintended and detrimental consequences. In refugee camps in Rwanda run by NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders and the International

Rescue Committee, the leaders of the genocide were actually being protected. When NGOs are active in war zones, are they becoming more like "force multipliers," expanding the capabilities of the military?29

To still others, NGOs are not just "benign parasites"—they have emerged from Western capitalist state experiences to serve the interests of the dominant capitalist classes. After all, NGOs are largely based in the Global North and are dominated by members of the same elite that run the state and international organizations. These critics see NGOs as falling under the exigencies of the capitalist economic system and as captive to those dominant interests. Too few NGOs have been able to break out of this mold and develop networks that could enable mass participation and change the fundamental rules of the game.

The roles NGOs play and the legitimacy they may or may not have depend in part on how they answer critical questions of accountability and transparency. Whether they are accountable and transparent or not, NGOs increasingly work with states, IGOs, and regional organizations.

Check Your Understanding

NGOs have grown and forged coalitions with other networks and mobilized the mass public. What accounts for the increasing influence of NGOs in international politics? Multinational corporations have become too corrupt and require nongovernmental actors to hold them accountable.

Contemporary issues cannot be solved by individual states since issues are intertwined and require transnational and national collaboration.

The number of democracies has shrunk making the role of NGOs vital in the twenty-first century.

Globalization has led many individuals to form their own NGOs to resolve their problems.

NGOs derive power from the fact that they do not have to compete for resources like states do.

the fact that they have an overabundance of support from donors.

new communication technologies which allow them to build coalitions.

their newly acquired voting power in the UN.

Glossary

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

private associations of individuals or groups that engage in political, economic, or social activities, usually across national borders

Endnotes

Note 23: This section on NGOs draws on Karns, Mingst, and Stiles, International Organizations, 3rd ed., chap. 6. Return to reference 23

Note 24: Nina Hall, Hans Peter Schmitz, and J. Michael Dedmon, "Transnational Advocacy and NGOs in the Digital Era: New Forms of Networked Power," International Studies Quarterly 64:1 (March 2019): 159–67. Return to reference 24

Note 25: Gerald Steinberg, "Foreign-Funded NGOs, Political Power, and Democratic Legitimacy," Lawfare, June 24, 2018, www.lawfareblog.com/foreign-funded-ngos-political-power-and-democratic-legitimacy (accessed 3/13/21). Return to reference 25

Note 26: Thomas Carothers, "The Closing Space Challenge: How Are Funders Responding?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2, 2015, http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/11/02/closing-space-challenge-how-are-funders-responding-pub-61808 (accessed 1/8/18). Return to reference 26

Note 27: See Alexander Cooley and James Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action," International Security 27:1 (Summer 2002): 5–39. Return to reference 27

Note 28: See, for example, William DeMars, NGOs and Transnational Networks: Wild Cards in World Politics

(London: Pluto, 2005); and Volker Heins, Nongovernmental Organizations in International Society: Struggles over Recognition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Return to reference 28

Note 29: Fiona Terry, Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Sarah Kenyon Lischer, "Military Intervention and the Humanitarian 'Force Multiplier,'" Global Governance 13:1 (January–March 2007): 99–118. Return to reference 29

DO IGOs AND NGOs MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The Realist View

Realists are skeptical about intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations, though they do not completely discount their place. Under anarchy, each state must act in its own self-interest and rely on self-help mechanisms. Realists doubt that collective action is effective and believe states will refuse to rely on the collectivity for the protection of their individual national interests. Realists can point to both the failures of the League of Nations and the weaknesses of the UN, especially during the Cold War era. The failure in 2003 of the United Nations to enforce Security Council resolutions against Iraq and its ineffectiveness in addressing the Syrian crisis are additional reminders of the organization's weakness and irrelevance. And indeed, as shown above, the OAS, the AU, and the Arab League often make false promises.

Some realists argue that IGOs are actually empty, deliberately designed not to function. They hide failures and create an illusion that progress is being made. They are decoys that legitimize collective inaction by filling space. Multilateralism does not work, just as realists warned.30

Even the EU story confirms some realists' pessimistic expectations. There is no longer an external security threat to coalesce EU members. Even Germany, the hegemon in the union, cooperates grudgingly at times—especially when it is expected to fund policies. These observations are consistent with realist expectations.31

In the state-centric world of the realists, NGOs are generally not on the radar screen at all. After all, most NGOs exist at the pleasure of states; states grant them legal authority, and states can take away that authority. To realists, NGOs are not independent actors but extensions of the state.

The Liberal View

Liberals argue that IGOs and NGOs do matter in international politics. To liberals, these organizations and institutions do not replace states as the primary actors in international politics, although, in a few cases, they may be moving in that direction. They do provide alternative venues, whether intergovernmental, private, or domestic, for states to engage in collective action and for individuals to join with other like-minded individuals in pursuit of their goals. They permit old issues to be seen in new ways, and they provide both a venue for discussing new transnational issues and an arena for action that is repeated over time. Such continuous interaction is apt to lead to more cooperative behavior, just as the neoliberal institutionalists hypothesized.

Most liberals are optimistic about the future of the EU. The dense web of organs and institutions that knit the community together make commitments credible. Dissolving those ties would be costly, just as the Brexit case has illustrated.

The Constructivist View

Constructivists place critical importance on institutions and norms.32 Both IGOs and NGOs can be norm entrepreneurs that socialize states and teach them new norms. Over time, those norms are internalized by states themselves; they can change state preferences and shape their behavior. A number of key norms are of particular interest to constructivists—for example, multilateralism, the practice of joining with others in making decisions. Both outside and within formal organizations, participants learn the value of this norm. Through multilateral participation, states have also learned other norms, including the emerging prohibition against the use of nuclear weapons, the norm of humanitarian intervention, and the increasing attention to human rights norms, discussed in later chapters. However, constructivists

recognize that those norms are sometimes contested, and can even be reversed.

Constructivists also refer to the importance of changing identities. Hence, they point to the changing identity of many in the EU—individuals have begun to think of themselves as European, identifying with the symbols of the EU itself (its passport and flag, for example). Thus, key notions of identity and the socialization of states through participation in EU organs and institutions make constructivists more optimistic about the future of the EU.

Constructivists offer a warning, too, about the potential dangers of international institutions. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore argue in Rules for the World that international organizations may act in ways that are contrary to the interests of their constituency. They may pursue particularistic goals, creating a bureaucratic culture that tolerates inefficiency and lack of accountability. International institutions may become dysfunctional, serving the interests of international bureaucrats.33 Supporters must beware of what IGOs and NGOs may bring.

THEORY IN BRIEF

Contending Perspectives on IGOs and NGOs

Realism/ Neorealism

Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism

Constructivism

IGOs

Skeptical of their ability to engage in collective action

Important independent actors for collective action; neoliberals see as forums

Both IGOs and NGOs can be norm entrepreneurs and can socialize states, leading to changes in state behavior

NGOs

Not independent actors; power belongs to states; any NGO power is derived from states

Increasingly key actors that represent different interests and facilitate collective action

Both IGOs and NGOs may lead to dysfunctional behavior, but may also represent new ideas and norms

Check Your Understanding

Which perspective would argue that NGOs are ineffective?
realism

liberalism

constructivism

idealism

Endnotes

Note 30: For the optimistic and pessimistic assessments of the EU offered by the three perspectives, see Radoslav S. Dimitrov, "Empty Institutions in Global Environmental Politics," International Studies Review 22:3 (September 2020): 626–50. Return to reference 30

Note 31: Richard Maher, "International Relations Theory and the Future of European Integration," International Studies Review 23:1 (March 2021): 89–114. Return to reference 31

Note 32: For pathbreaking theoretical and empirical work, see Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Martha Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Return to reference 32

Note 33: Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004). See also Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," International Organization 53:4 (Autumn): 699–732; and Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of

the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," in Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 117.

Return to reference 33

IN SUM: IGOs AND NGOs RESPOND TO NEW ISSUES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

IGOs and NGOs have acted in conjunction with states to address traditional international relations issues such as state security and the international political economy, as illustrated in this chapter. But in nontraditional issues like human rights and human security—including the environment, migration, and health—IGOs and NGOs have played a more independent and catalyzing role, as we see in the final three chapters.

Discussion Questions

Everyone agrees that reform of the UN Security Council is necessary. What proposal for reform would you support? Why?

Do IGOs and NGOs threaten state sovereignty? Why or why not?

What is the relationship between NGOs and the state?

What problems arise when NGOs take over the tasks of states?

Key Terms

collective good (p. 310) complex (or multidimensional) peacekeeping (p. 319) European Union (EU) (p. 330) General Assembly (p. 316) Group of 77 (p. 316)

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (p. 308) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (p. 342) peacebuilding (p. 320)

Security Council (p. 314) traditional peacekeeping (p. 319)

Glossary

collective good

a public good that is available to all regardless of individual contribution—e.g., the air, the oceans, or Antarctica—that no one owns or is individually responsible for

complex (or multidimensional) peacekeeping

multidimensional operations using military and civilian personnel, often including traditional peacekeeping and nation-building activities; more dangerous because not all parties have consented and because force is usually used

European Union (EU)

a union of twenty-eight European states, formerly the European Economic Community; designed originally during the 1950s for economic integration, but since expanded into a closer political and economic union

General Assembly

one of the major organs of the United Nations; generally addresses issues other than those of peace and security; each member state has one vote; operates with six functional committees composed of all member states

Group of 77

a coalition of about 125 developing countries that press for reforms in economic relations between developing and developed countries; also referred to as the South

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

international agencies or bodies established by states and controlled by member states that deal with areas of common interest

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

private associations of individuals or groups that engage in political, economic, or social activities, usually across national borders

peacebuilding

post-conflict political and economic activities designed to preserve and strengthen peace settlements; includes civil administration, elections, and economic development activities

Security Council

one of the major organs of the United Nations charged with the responsibility for peace and security issues; includes five permanent members with veto power and ten nonpermanent members chosen from the General Assembly

traditional peacekeeping

the use of multilateral third-party military forces to achieve several different objectives: containing interstate conflict; enforcing ceasefires and separating military forces; used during the Cold War to prevent conflict among the great powers from escalating

10

Human Rights

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Leaked documents have confirmed the construction of Uighur internment camps witnessed on satellite images of the Xinjiang region of China. While the international community has labeled the actions of the Chinese government as acts of genocide, there is debate over what that designation means. What actions should the international community take to mitigate the crisis? What are the consequences of inaction?

In November 2019, the New York Times published leaked documents from a high-level Chinese official detailing the coercive clampdown on Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, China. The documents showed that more than one million ethnic Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities had been forced into internment camps and confirmed what many in the world already suspected and satellite imagery had photographed. President Xi Jinping and other officials had laid the foundation for the camps beginning in 2014 following Uighur attacks against Han Chinese. At the time, Xi called on his government to “struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separation,” promising to show “absolutely no mercy” in eradicating radical Islam in Xinjiang. In the camps, government officials not only interrogated but also reeducated internees, vowing to imprint the Chinese national identity into

the soul of the Uighurs and other Muslims. That reeducation was accompanied by torture, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, and various forms of abuse, including allegations of forced sterilization of Uighur women.1

The Chinese government had been gradually curtailing Uighur rights for years, obliterating their religious, cultural, and economic rights. In the course of the campaign, the government employed various high-tech tools—iris and body scanners, DNA sequencers, and facial recognition cameras—to round up internees, placing national security over civic and political rights. Although some Chinese officials called for a halt to the program, the government staunchly defended these camps publicly as job training centers or boarding schools.

Even before these documents laid bare the truth, there had been international condemnation. In 2018, 14 Western ambassadors to China, led by Canada, Australia, and 12 European countries, had confronted the regime. Individual American officials spoke out in support of the condemnation, but the U.S. government was generally silent as trade negotiations with China proceeded. New Zealand and moderate Muslim countries like Turkey, Pakistan, and Indonesia, who have critical economic relationships with China, also did not formally speak out against the regime. Then, as COVID-19 surged in 2020 and anger toward China spread for its role in suppressing information about the virus, states began to openly criticize China. When reports surfaced that forced Uighur laborers were making face masks for Western markets and working in Xinjiang's cotton fields to spur production and meet global supply chains for protective medical gear, states were faced with a dilemma.

What should the world do about China's abuse of a group of its citizens? For several centuries after the Treaties of Westphalia, state sovereignty remained unchallenged. How states treated individuals and groups within their own jurisdiction was their own responsibility. In the twenty-first century, that is no longer true. What happens in Asian cities, African towns, European streets, and American halls of government is not only heard around the world but also watched carefully. State authorities that take coercive actions

against individuals and groups are widely condemned by other states and the media. Even what happens within the family (e.g., violence against spouses, children, and people of a different sexual orientation) is now viewed as a public issue.

The actions of the People's Republic of China are no longer viewed as acceptable in peacetime, just as trafficking of people and illicit goods by states and criminal organizations and perpetuating violence against women either in the public or private sphere are actions no longer deemed to be defensible. In war or civil conflict, forcing children to be soldiers, torturing prisoners of war, or targeting groups because of their ethnicity or race is not considered consistent with practicing human rights.

International human rights have emerged as a key issue in world politics. But while these issues have only relatively recently risen to a prominent place on the international agenda, the ethical treatment of individuals and groups of individuals —or human rights—has a long historical genesis. Both philosophers and theologians have waxed eloquent over proper treatment of individuals and groups, while novelists and essayists have called attention to the evils of slavery, forced servitude, and the degradation of people. Individuals who were prevented from freely expressing themselves or practicing their religion have emigrated; wars have been fought over acceptable treatment of individuals and groups. The principle that people care about other people comes from religious, philosophical, and historical traditions. We briefly explore those traditions and then trace how the protection of rights of individuals and groups has become internationalized.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Describe the religious, philosophical, and historical foundations of human rights.

Explain the roles that states, IGOs, and NGOs perform in the protection and monitoring of human rights.

Identify what human rights have been protected under international law.

Analyze why the international community has so often failed to respond to allegations of genocide.

Analyze why women's human rights in the private sphere are so difficult to address.

Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the R2P norm.

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Endnotes

Note 01: For the historical overview, see Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, "The Xinjiang Papers: 'Absolutely No Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims," New York Times, November 16, 2019. See also Chris Buckley, "Brushing Off Criticism, China's Xi Calls Policies in Xinjiang 'Totally Correct,'" New York Times, September 26, 2020. The direct quotations from Xi and other officials are found in these two sources.

Return to reference 1

RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

All of the world's great religions—Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Confucianism—assert the dignity of individuals and people's responsibilities to fellow human beings. Different religions emphasize different facets: Confucianism, the social group; Judaism, the responsibility to help those in need; and Buddhism, the rejection of government policies that cause suffering.2 But do these religions assert the inalienable rights of human beings to a standard of treatment? Or are these merely duties or responsibilities of the faithful? Who protects these rights and enforces these duties? Do these religions support human rights for all? The answers are not clear.

Like the world's religions, philosophers and political theorists have also conceptualized the rights of humans, each with different emphases. Liberal political theorists assert individual rights that the state can neither usurp nor undermine. John Locke, for example, wrote that individuals are equal and autonomous beings whose natural rights predate both national

and international law. Public authority is designed to secure these rights. Key historic documents such as the English Magna Carta in 1215, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, and the U.S. Bill of Rights in 1791 lay out these rights. Political and civil human rights, including freedom of speech, religion, and press, deserve protection, and governments should not deprive individuals of these freedoms.

Theorists in the radical tradition, heavily influenced by Karl Marx and other socialist writers, identify social and economic rights for individuals, which they believe the state should provide. Individuals, according to this view, enjoy material rights—rights to education, decent work, an adequate standard of living, housing—that are critical for sustaining and improving life. Socialist theorists believe that without these guarantees of socioeconomic rights, political and civil rights are meaningless.

What is included as a human right has continually been reconceptualized in the last two centuries, expanding into the realm of group rights. These include both group rights for marginalized peoples and collective rights. Group rights include protection for indigenous peoples, the disabled, and those of different sexual orientations or gender identities. Collective rights include rights necessary for the collectivity to survive—namely, the right to development, the right to a clean environment, and the right to live in a democracy. These rights are highly contested within states and in the international arena.3

Four major debates emerge from these foundations. First, are such issues really human rights? That is, are they inalienable —fundamental to every person? Are they necessary to life? Are they nonnegotiable—that is, are the rights so essential that they cannot be taken away? If human rights are inalienable, are they not, by definition, universal rights?

Second, if human rights are universal, are they applicable to all peoples, in all states, religions, and cultures, without exception? Or are rights dependent on culture? Some scholars have argued for cultural relativism, the idea that different rights are relevant in specific cultural settings. Particularly

sensitive have been the debates on women's status and child protection. Some scholars, like political scientist Jack Donnelly, argue for both universal and contextual elements, which he calls "relative universality."4 The Vienna Declaration adopted at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights stated, "All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated." But the same document qualified the statement, saying "the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind."

Third, should some rights be prioritized over others? Just because political-civil rights have a longer historical genesis, are those rights more important than others? Some writers from East Asia, for example, argue that advocating the rights of the individual over the welfare of the community as a whole is unsound and potentially dangerous.5 The socialist states of the former Soviet bloc, as well as many European social-welfare states, rank economic and social rights as high priorities, even higher than political and civil rights. Yet, to many, human rights are interdependent or linked; the purpose of each type of human right is to treat people with respect and dignity.

The Dharavi neighborhood is one of the biggest slums in Mumbai, India. Many of its residents lack decent work, education, housing, and health. Although human rights are often debated in lofty terms, the absence of socioeconomic rights protections has real consequences for people.

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Fourth, who has the responsibility and the "right" to respond to violations of human rights? And is this response an absolute obligation or merely an opportunity? Traditionally, it has been the state's responsibility to protect its citizens, but if the state is the abuser, who should and can respond? How? Does state sovereignty trump protection of human rights?

The first global human rights movement, the antislavery movement, illustrates the long struggle in responding to these questions.6 Beginning in the late eighteenth century, abolitionists (including religious groups, workers, housewives,

and business leaders) in the United States, Great Britain, and France organized to advocate for an end to the slave trade. In 1815, when the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna was signed, it stated that the slave trade was "repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality." The act was framed in terms of morality, not in human rights language. The act did not declare that slavery was illegal, nor did it provide mechanisms for supporting that aspiration. At that point, states did not view freedom as an inalienable right, fundamental to every person.

Nor did the right apply universally to all states and cultures. Domestic constituencies in states responded by writing letters, signing petitions, and advocating publicly, leading both the British and American governments to ban the slave trade in their territories in 1807 (i.e., new enslaved individuals could not be imported from abroad). But it was not until a half century later that the U.S. Civil War was fought to free enslaved people. Elsewhere, Spain abolished slavery in Cuba in 1880, and Brazil ended the practice in 1888. The International Convention on the Abolition of Slavery was not ratified until 1926. The antislavery movement suggests that political-civil rights and social-economic rights are intertwined. Since enslaved people were owned by other humans as property, they had no rights, indeed no human dignity at all. Even after political and civil rights were won, formerly enslaved individuals and their descendants had, and still have, a long struggle to acquire full social-economic rights, rights often denied because of discrimination and racism.

In 2014, the Islamic State seemed to revive slavery by forcing Yazidi women by the thousands into sexual slavery. Contrary to prevailing norms, the IS claimed that the practice is a religious one approved by the Koran, even as other Muslim scholars refute that association and affirm the universal consensus that slavery is both morally repugnant and illegal. But the practice continues, albeit in different forms. AntiSlavery International identifies contemporary notions of slavery, such as child slavery, human trafficking, forced labor, forced marriages, and descent-based slavery (i.e., people born

into slavery because their ancestors were enslaved). The notion of who should be protected has expanded since the start of the antislavery movement.

Recognition of who should take responsibility to protect rights has also expanded over time. States remain primarily responsible. But since World War II, the notion of an international community responsibility to protect human rights has developed.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is an example of cultural relativism? The International Criminal Court pursues the head of a state for crimes against humanity.

A nongovernmental organization attempts to persuade states to sanction a country for the state's tendency to detain members of the press without trial.

A state argues that a law prohibiting women drivers should be judged by that society's standards and not Western standards of gender relations.

A state invades a neighboring state on the pretext that territory between the two states had historically been their possession.

Glossary

cultural relativism

the belief that human rights, ethics, and morality are determined by cultures and history and therefore are not universally the same

Endnotes

Note 02: See Paul Gordon Lauren, The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), chap. 1. Return to reference 2

Note 03: See Alexandru Grigorescu and Emily Komp, "The 'Broadening' of International Human Rights: The Cases of the Right to Development and Right to Democracy," International Politics 54 (2017): 238–54. Return to reference 3

Note 04: Jack Donnelly, International Human Rights, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2013). See esp. chap. 3. Return to reference 4

Note 05: See, for example, Amartya Sen, "Universal Truths: Human Rights and the Westernizing Illusion," Harvard International Review 20:3 (Summer 1998): 40–43. Return to reference 5

Note 06: See Paul Gordon Lauren, Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996). Return to reference 6

HUMAN RIGHTS AS EMERGING INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Human rights only gradually became an international issue. While NGOs propelled the antislavery initiatives, it was one individual, Henry Dunant, a French medic working in the Battle of Solferino in 1859, who pushed for ways to protect those on the battlefield. Working in conjunction with a nongovernmental group, the Geneva Public Welfare Society, later to become the International Committee of the Red Cross, states codified that protection in 1864 in the first Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field.

Four Geneva Conventions adopted with virtually universal approval in 1949 and three later protocols together form the core of international humanitarian law. These include Geneva I for protection of the wounded in the armed forces; Geneva II for protection of the wounded and sick shipwrecked at sea; Geneva III for protection of prisoners of war; and Geneva IV for protection of civilians at the time of war. These also form the basis for war crimes and crimes against humanity, now spelled out in Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute (see below). Most of the norms regarding armed conflict apply only to interstate wars and to states, not to nonstate actors, though one of the protocols does apply to victims of noninternational conflicts.

The League of Nations Covenant made little explicit mention of human rights, although it noted protection of certain groups.

For example, the Mandates Commission was authorized to protect the treatment of dependent peoples with the goal of self-determination, but it could not carry out independent inspections. Likewise, the 1919 Minorities Treaties required states to provide protection to all inhabitants, regardless of nationality, language, race, or religion. The League also established principles for assisting refugees, the precedent for the protected status of refugees under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

President Franklin Roosevelt's famous "Four Freedoms" speech in 1941 called for a world based on four essential freedoms: freedom of speech and worship, and freedom from want and fear. However, that new moral order would not take shape until after World War II, when the full extent of the Holocaust was shockingly revealed. With that recognition came the demand for international action. Thus, at the conference founding the UN, civil society groups, churches, and peace societies successfully pushed for inclusion of human rights in the charter. In the end, the UN Charter (Article 55c) gave a role to the organization in "promoting and encouraging respect for rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

Drawing on the religious, philosophical, and historical foundations discussed earlier, the UN General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, a statement of human rights aspirations. Though not legally binding, the statement identified 30 human rights principles covering both political and economic rights. These principles were eventually codified in two legally binding documents: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights approved in 1966 and ratified in 1976. Together, the three documents are known as the International Bill of Rights. The conflict between Western and socialist views about which categories of human rights needed to be protected under international law blocked conclusion of a single legally binding treaty that covered both categories. States could thus choose which (if any) of these treaties to join.

TABLE 10.1

Selected UN Human Rights Conventions

CONVENTION	OPENED FOR RATIFICATION	ENTERED INTO FORCE	RATIFICATIONS (AS OF 2020)
GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS			
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	1976	173
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights	1966	1976	171
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION			
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1966	1969	182
International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid	1973	1976	109
RIGHTS OF WOMEN			

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1979

1981

189

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND OTHER SLAVE-LIKE PRACTICES

UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others

1949

1951

82

International Convention on the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade (1926), as amended in 1953

1953

1955

99

REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

1951

1954

146

CHILDREN

Convention on the Rights of the Child

1989

1990

196

PHYSICAL SECURITY

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

1948

1951

152

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

1984

1987

171

Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

2006

2010

63

OTHER

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

1990

2003

55

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2007

2008

182

Sources: University of Minnesota Human Rights Library and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Subsequently, the UN and its agencies have been responsible for setting human rights standards in numerous areas, as Table 10.1 shows. But, while the UN Charter gave human rights a prominent place and the conventions gave states that joined them a standard to follow, the UN Charter (Article 2[7]) acknowledges the primacy of state sovereignty: “Nothing

contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state." So who protects human rights and how?

Check Your Understanding

Which statement best describes the emergence of human rights as an international responsibility? Human rights have always been an international issue.

The UN General Assembly approved the UN Declaration of Human Rights before World War II.

Children are left out of international responsibility for human rights.

The primacy of state sovereignty complicates the protection of human rights.

Which of the following is known as the International Bill of Rights? the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights taken together

Glossary

international humanitarian law

a body of law comprised of the four Geneva Conventions and protocols protecting individuals during war, including wounded military, prisoners of war, and civilians

International Bill of Rights

the collective name for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

STATES AS PROTECTORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

States, as the Westphalian tradition and realists posit, are primarily responsible for protecting human rights standards within their own jurisdiction. Many liberal democratic states have based human rights practices on political and civil liberties. Canada, for one, has been an international leader in expanding the ideas of political and civil liberties in its promotion of women's rights, the rights of the child, and the rights of sexual minorities. The state was one of the first to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Canadians also played a critical role in UN women's conferences in which women's rights were recognized as human rights. In 2017, the minister of foreign affairs announced the first Feminist International Assistance Policy on behalf of women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights. In the words of one Canadian official, "Part of being Canadian is to feel obligated to defend human rights."7

The constitutions of the United States and many European democracies emphasize freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and due process. And those same states have tried to internationalize these principles. That is, it has become part of their foreign policy agenda to support similar provisions; U.S. support for such initiatives is evident in both Iraq and Afghanistan constitutions. And the European Union has made candidate members show significant progress toward improving political and civil liberties records before granting them membership in the EU. These actions may represent subtle coercion—funding and membership are contingent on human rights protection. But in the long run, constructivists might anticipate that states become gradually socialized into these new norms of international behavior.

Why do democratic states support political and civil rights in their foreign policy? One explanation is based on self-interest: states sharing these values are better positioned to trade with one another and will, according to the democratic peace theory discussed in Chapter 6, be less likely to go to war with one another. The second explanation is based in liberalism: democracies believe strongly in the protection of individuals

from unsavory governments and desire those values to be projected abroad.

Some European social welfare states have sought to protect economic and social rights because they hold that the government needs to do as much as possible to ensure access to basic necessities like free education from the pre-K to university levels and access to affordable health insurance and medical services. But how much should the government actually do? What is an adequate level? Economic and social rights are achieved only gradually, and thus the crux of the discussion is whether the state is doing enough to protect the economic and social welfare of its citizens.

State Tactics to Protect Human Rights

What can states do if they believe that the human rights of individuals in another state are not being protected? A number of instruments are available. States may use economic incentives to try to improve human rights. They do this by tying other benefits—usually related to the economy or security—to an improvement in the state's human rights policies. The Obama administration felt that perhaps lifting the travel bans and opening a U.S. embassy might lead the Cuban government to treat its citizens better. After all, six decades of isolation had not stopped Cuba's abusive human rights practices. In 2017, the Trump administration reversed the Obama era opening to Cuba and reimposed sanctions. Then in 2021, the Biden administration removed many of the Trump-era travel restrictions, permitted remittances to flow, and renewed diplomatic talks. Clearly, the use of economic sanctions to punish states for human rights abuses or the practice of relaxing such sanctions to encourage different behavior does not always lead in a straight line to the desired outcome.

The United States and European donor states can also tie better human rights policies to more foreign or military aid, or they can reduce aid if a state's human rights record is particularly egregious. In 1976, under pressure from Congress, the U.S. Department of State began writing annual country reports on human rights. Over time, these reports have become

increasingly comprehensive. Along with annual reports from NGOs like Amnesty International and Freedom House, they are used in the process of deciding whether the United States should allocate foreign aid to a country or engage in a relationship. However, these reports are not the only criteria, and sometimes major human rights violators do receive aid or win significant concessions because of other overriding strategic or political interests.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESHuman Rights: A View from the United States

As early as 1630, lawyer John Winthrop urged departing immigrants to the land that would become the United States to develop “a city upon a hill,” a phrase from Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. Over the centuries, the view of the United States as exceptional has expanded to include its reputation as one of the oldest democracies forged around political and civil liberties embodied in the Bill of Rights and, since World War II, as a country with a unique international mission. In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt stated, “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them.”a

The United States claims to believe that freedom, human rights, rule of law, and democracy are universal norms and values, and many U.S. actions have supported this view. However, the United States’ behavior has not always reflected its rhetorical commitment to a human rights agenda. Its history of racial discrimination, Cold War politics, and approach toward international human rights treaties and institutions provide illustrative examples.

First, the U.S. history of racial discrimination, from slavery through Jim Crow laws and segregation, as well as more subtle forms of discrimination, has tarnished the U.S. human rights record. The civil rights movement for Black equality gained momentum in the 1960s, and that movement was revitalized with the 2020 death of George Floyd and the protests by the Black Lives Matter movement. In solidarity, African countries turned to the UN Human Rights Council to start an inquiry

into systemic racism and police brutality in the United States and other places.

Second, dominated by fear of communism, U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War supported anticommunist regimes regardless of their record on political or civil liberties. In the name of national interest and geopolitics, the United States supported right-wing dictatorships in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Nowhere was that policy more evident than in the United States' support for South Africa's apartheid government, despite the fact that the regime denied Black citizens all basic political, civil, and economic rights. After all, South Africa produced key minerals and held a key geostrategic location, and the regime was anticommunist.

Finally, the U.S. approach to international human rights institutions illustrates a disconnect between its human rights rhetoric and actual policy. While the United States has signed many human rights treaties, several have never been ratified, including those on economic and social rights, on the child, and on protection of those with disabilities. The United States successfully fought for key procedural provisions in the Rome Statute, which created the International Criminal Court, but it never ratified the Rome Statute. In 2018, the United States withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council. In 2020, when the Appeals Chamber of the ICC called for a formal investigation into the crimes against humanity and war crimes of torture, rape, and sexual violence committed by Americans in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2004, the Trump administration immediately authorized sanctions and visa restrictions against ICC personnel, even before any inquiry began.

Why has the United States wavered from its historic and oftentimes rhetorical commitment to human rights? First, as liberals might argue, presidential administrations matter. While the Carter administration (1977–81) was known for its strong support of human rights, the Trump administration pulled back. In 2019, the administration announced it would not cooperate with UN monitors and investigators over human rights violations occurring inside the United States. A year later, complaining about the "proliferation of protections in

human rights agreements," then secretary of state Pompeo called for a narrowing of human rights to include only protection of private property and support for religious freedom. In contrast, the Biden administration has rejoined the UN Human Rights Council as an observer with the intention of seeking election as a full member. The United States is also joining with allies in the liberal internationalist tradition signaling more action against human rights abusers and signaling support for a Summit for Democracy to advance human rights.

The United States has asserted that many of the international treaties infringe on its sovereignty and that the separation of powers makes it difficult to incorporate international human rights provisions. So the United States uses "understandings" to a treaty to accommodate constitutional provisions. Other times, the United States reinterprets treaties already in force in the name of national interest. After 9/11, the Bush administration reinterpreted international treaties, redefining torture, for example. This was justified as essential to national security, a realist argument.

In the case of the ICC, a major concern was the possibility that the ICC might prosecute U.S. military personnel or even the U.S. president without U.S. approval. To that possibility the United States argued that as a world power, it has "exceptional" international responsibility that should make its military and civilian leaders immune from the ICC's jurisdiction.

Despite this, however, constructivists would point out that international human rights norms have become firmly embedded. Thus, when the United States acts contrary to those human rights norms, vigorous international debate and occasional condemnation follow.

In May 2020, Black Lives Matter protests erupted around the United States after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What are the costs of the U.S. practice of not ratifying key international human rights treaties?

What are the trade-offs between national security and human rights in foreign policy decisions?

How can the United States expect other countries to follow human rights norms if the United States continually touts exceptions for itself?

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Punishing states through sanctions is another tactic states use to push for stronger human rights policies, as discussed in Chapter 6. In 2020, the Trump administration barred 11 companies from purchasing American technology, citing their complicity in the campaign against the Uighurs. That was not the first time China was singled out. Following China's crackdown on dissidents and the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989, the United States, joined by Japan and members of the European Union, instituted an arms embargo against China and cancelled new foreign aid. Some estimate that the coercive action may have cost China over $11 billion in aid over a four-year period. But imposing sanctions to try to pressure a state to reverse its egregious policy (or policies) often punishes the population more than the state, impinging further on individual rights.

In cases of particularly severe violations, like genocide or mass atrocities, states may choose to target an offending state using force. However, sometimes states may justify using force in the name of responding to human rights violations, even though they are really acting to protect their strategic interests. For example, in 1978, Vietnam used force in Kampuchea (now Cambodia) where an estimated two million Kampucheans had been killed, and Tanzania used force in Uganda in 1979 to depose the Idi Amin dictatorship that had killed an estimated 300,000 civilians. While both actions signaled support for the human rights of the deceased by removing violators from power, many suggest that strategic interests were the real underlying motivation. Before Vietnam entered Kampuchea, the Kampuchean Revolutionary Army had instigated repeated attacks in southwest Vietnam; before

Tanzania entered Uganda, the Ugandan military had invaded northern Tanzania and announced the annexation of that territory. The true underlying motivations for the use of force may never be known.

States can adopt sanctions or use force unilaterally, as the United States has done vis-à-vis Cuba (sanctions) and Vietnam and Tanzania did vis-à-vis Kampuchea and Uganda (use of force). Sometimes, however, they might do so multilaterally, as a coalition of states including the United States and European Union did when sanctioning Myanmar in the late 2010s for its treatment of the Rohingya. Using force is less often a multilateral endeavor, though it does happen. For example, NATO's air bombing campaign in Kosovo was done in the name of stopping the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. Regardless of whether the actions are unilateral or multilateral, however, states' use of coercive measures to address human rights violations is selective and often controversial.

States as Abusers of Human Rights

States are also violators of human rights. Both regime type and forms of real or perceived threats to the state are explanations for state abuse. In general, authoritarian or autocratic states are more likely to abuse political and civil rights, while less developed states, even liberal democratic ones, may be unable or unwilling to meet basic obligations of social and economic rights due to scarce resources or lack of political will.

All states, including democratic ones, threatened by civil strife or terrorist activity are apt to use repression against foes, domestic or foreign. State security usually prevails over individual rights. In fact, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights acknowledges that heads of state may revoke some political-civil liberties when national security is threatened.

Nowhere is the potential clash between human rights and national security more focused than in the issue of torture, prohibited in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. May states, fearing imminent attack or grave harm, use torture to coerce

those they believe have relevant knowledge? If states restrain themselves and avoid coercive interrogations, some citizens may die. Which, then, is the greater harm—violation of the rights of the detained, or loss of the lives of innocent citizens? In 2009, former U.S. vice president Dick Cheney argued publicly that political leaders had a greater responsibility to the nation's security, an argument reprised by then candidate Donald Trump in 2016 during the U.S. presidential campaign. Others, including prominent American military leaders, responded by questioning whether less violent methods might not have achieved the same results. Still others, like the late U.S. senator John McCain—himself a victim of torture during the Vietnam War—argued that Americans should not use torture because it is wrong and violates what it means to be an American.8 Indeed, the Convention against Torture is clear: freedom from torture is a right never to be revoked. But what acts are considered torture remains controversial.

Economic conditions also influence a country's adherence to human rights standards. Poor states or states experiencing deteriorating economic conditions are apt to repress political-civil rights, in an effort by the elite to maintain authority and divert attention from economic disintegration. But even economically developed states may have difficulty meeting the demands of economic and social rights. A country as rich as the United States cannot provide access to basic medical care for all. In some cases, those rights may be deliberately undermined or denied due to discrimination based on race, creed, national origin, or gender.

Finally, culture and history affect a state's human rights record. Where there is a long history of communal violence and ethnic hatred, human rights are more apt to be abused. High degrees of factionalization along ethnic, religious, or ideological lines also bring out the worst abuses.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is not a tactic that states can pursue if they believe another state is committing human rights violations? States may remove another state from the Security Council for human rights violations.

States may sanction another state to punish them for human rights abuses.

States may use force to intervene in another state for severe human rights violations.

States may use economic incentives to persuade another state to improve its human rights record.

Endnotes

Note 07: Quoted in Alison Brysk, Global Good Samaritans: Human Rights as Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 92. Return to reference 7

Note 08: For a discussion of the various U.S. government committees on the use of torture, see Robert Jervis, "The Torture Blame Game," Foreign Affairs 94:3 (May/June 2015): 120–27. Return to reference 8

Note a: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address January 6, 1941, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, ed. Samuel Rosenman, vol. 9 (New York: Random House, 1938–50), p. 672. Return to reference a

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY—IGOS AND NGOS

What can the international community do to protect human rights? What can the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations do when they are themselves composed of the very sovereign states that threaten individual and group rights?

IGOs in Action

The human rights activities of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) involve, first and foremost, setting the international human rights standards articulated in the many international treaties. (See Table 10.1.) With standards set, even though some may be aspirational, the IGOs can then move on to problems connected with implementing those standards.

Second, the United Nations, the Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights, and the Inter-American Court of

Human Rights have worked to monitor state behavior by establishing procedures for complaints about state practices, compiling reports from interested and neutral observers about state behavior, and investigating alleged violations. Monitoring state behavior is a sensitive undertaking. Special bodies have been established to examine, advise, and publicly report on the human rights situation in a given country or on worldwide violations. But for many states, intensive scrutiny of a government's behavior in its own country impinges on state sovereignty.

Beginning in 2006, the UN Human Rights Council initiated the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), wherein every member state participates in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of its own human rights record every four years. Based on that assessment, other states make recommendations, such as offering new approaches, suggesting that the state share its best practices with others, or even taking specific actions. The records of all 193 UN members have been scrutinized in two review rounds, with states offering recommendations and responding, all on a voluntary basis. After the first round, it was found that almost two-thirds of recommendations have been accepted.9 UPR's strength is the public pressure applied by NGOs who hold states accountable. Peers judging peers may be stronger than assessment by so-called international experts.10

The third area in which IGOs have operated is in taking measures to improve levels of state compliance with human rights norms. In the UN system, that responsibility rests with the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Among the most visible of those promotional activities is ensuring fair elections. That duty is consistent with the words found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government." Thus, since 1992, the United Nations has provided electoral assistance in over 100 countries; between 2017 and 2019 alone that assistance went to 50 countries. The role of the UN varies, from certification of the electoral process as in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 to providing expert monitoring to overseeing the vote count, as in the 2014

contested election in Afghanistan. While the UN presence does not eliminate cheating and fraud, states gain legitimacy by having external monitors.

Enforcement actions by IGOs for human rights violations are also possible, but rare. In the case of apartheid—legalized racial discrimination against the Black majority in South Africa and a comparable policy in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)—the international community took coercive economic measures, imposing sanctions on offenders. But the South African government did not immediately change its human rights policy, nor was the government immediately ousted from power. Policies did, however, change after several years of sanctions. This has led some to cite the relevance of sanctions in bringing about change in states' violations of human rights.

In a few cases, states may use IGOs to respond to egregious humanitarian emergencies. So-called humanitarian intervention was used in the crisis in Somalia in 1992. In that case, the UN Security Council explicitly linked human rights violations to security threats. When the UN could not reach agreement, other multilateral organizations took action. NATO became the instrument of the intervention in the case of Libya. Yet IGOs intervene on few cases. Many states are suspicious of strengthening international organizations' power to intervene in what they still regard as their domestic jurisdiction.

The International Criminal Court provides the means to prosecute leaders accused of crimes under international humanitarian law. Its record is discussed below. Other courts, mostly regional in membership, work to enforce human rights law. Both the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights respond to cases brought by states and individuals claiming that human rights norms have been violated. In 2020, the European Court sat in judgment in over 870 cases, but at the end of 2020, it had almost 62,000 pending applications. Over two-thirds of those came from individuals in four countries: Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Romania. But while these courts make a legal determination, it

is ultimately the states themselves that provide relief to individuals and enforce decisions.

NGOs' Unique Roles

NGOs have been particularly vocal and sometimes very effective in the area of human rights. Of the hundreds of human rights organizations with interests that cross national borders, a core group has been the most vocal and attracted the most attention, including Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW). These organizations publicize issues, put pressure on states (both offenders and enforcers), and lobby international organizations. Furthermore, these organizations have often formed coalitions, leading to advocacy networks and social movements.11

NGO campaigns on a particular issue take time. During the 1970s, disability rights groups formed first in Europe and North America, generally organizing along lines of disability type. Activists were fragmented, and there was no overarching approach. These various groups eventually adopted a rights-based approach. By 1992, seven of the groups had merged into a loose network, the International Disability Alliance. As new communication technologies were becoming mainstream, disability activists began to elicit the support of established NGOs like HRW and AI. With the backing of HRW and AI, and funding from the Open Society Institute, a disability convention was brought to the UN General Assembly. In 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted.12 By the end of 2020, 182 states had become parties to the treaty, obligating them to prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability. This example illustrates how concerted NGO action over time can result in substantive international law.

The use of social media such as Twitter and TikTok has proven particularly effective for shaping discourse surrounding an issue and mobilizing constituencies. In May 2020, the video of George Floyd, an American Black man begging for his life for almost ten minutes as a White police officer applied pressure to his neck while colleagues watched in silence, was shared on Facebook and viewed billions of times around the world.

Floyd's death and his words, "I can't breathe," sent shockwaves around the world. Signs, paintings, and demonstrations arose from Milan to Dublin, Syria, Belgium, and New Zealand. The Black Lives Matter movement—started before and continuing after the George Floyd killing—and its antiracism message has led to reassessments of various forms of discrimination in many countries, all amplified by disturbing media images. This was not the first time that the U.S. record on race has caused reverberations around the world.13

Social movements, like NGOs, have the power to develop new approaches and tackle new problems more quickly than intergovernmental structures. And research suggests that the presence of a strong civil society embodied in NGOs and national human rights institutions strengthens respect for human rights and regional court decisions.14 Remember, however, they have no independent legal standing, have few material resources compared to states, and exist at the discretion of the states in which they operate.

Evaluating the Efforts of the International Community

How effective are the efforts of the international community in the area of human rights? Setting the standards in treaties is critical—without a standard, there is no benchmark for assessment. The 16 human rights treaties under the auspices of the UN, alone, and their various protocols and amendments—covering everything from genocide, war crimes, and torture to women's rights, children's rights, and the protection of persons with disabilities—are therefore a relative success story for standard setting. But of the various activities discussed, perhaps none is as effective as monitoring.

NGOs have also been particularly useful in monitoring activities. Amnesty International, founded in 1961, has become perhaps the most effective human rights monitor. AI was involved in efforts to end the abuse of human rights in Uruguay and Paraguay in the 1970s. Using its research and publicity expertise, AI was also instrumental in bringing international attention to the Argentinian military abuses involving abductions and disappearances in the early 1980s.

While the organization originally emphasized the protection of individual political prisoners, its agenda has now broadened to include multiple issues, including systematic abuses of economic and social rights, women's rights, and LGBT rights. AI and organizations like it also provide information for the UN's own monitoring activities as well as for the United States.15

Does monitoring by IGOs or NGOs through investigations, reports, resolutions, and naming and shaming ultimately make a difference for rights protection? The evidence is mixed. One study of over 400 human rights organizations on shaming governments between 1992 and 2004 found that states targeted by NGOs do improve their human rights practices. But shaming is not enough. Shaming is effective when both domestic NGOs on the ground and advocacy by other third parties and individuals are present.16 Another study of monitoring by the UN, NGOs, and the media between 1975 and 2000 found that governments put in the spotlight for abuses sometimes continue or accelerate violations depending on the issue. But only when NGOs actively took up issues did practices improve.17 Thus, IGO and NGO monitoring over time, as well as the Universal Periodic Review, is not necessarily enough to alter practices but may help.

All of these activities on behalf of human rights are fraught with difficulties. A state's ratification of a treaty is no guarantee of its willingness or ability to follow the treaty's provisions. Monitoring state compliance through self-reporting systems presumes a willingness to comply and be transparent, a major caveat to be sure. Taking direct action by imposing economic embargoes may not achieve the objective—a change in human rights policy—and may be harmful to those very individuals whom the embargoes are trying to help.

International and national actions on behalf of human rights objectives remain a very tricky business. This idea becomes all the more apparent when we delve into specific human rights problems.

Check Your Understanding

The UN Human Rights Council began a new approach in 2006 to monitoring and pressure by enacting Universal Periodic Review for all states.

focusing only on the worst abusers.

issuing a new annual report in combination with Amnesty International.

mandating the abolition of the death penalty.

Which of the following is not a task nongovernmental organizations carry out to protect human rights? publicizing issues

voting in the UN

leading advocacy networks

putting pressure on states

Endnotes

Note 09: See Edward McMahon and Marta Ascherio, “A Step Ahead in Promoting Human Rights? The Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council,” Global Governance 18:2 (April–June 2012): 239. Return to reference 9

Note 10: Valentina Carraro, “Promoting Compliance with Human Rights: The Performance of the United Nations’ Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies,” International Studies Quarterly 63:4 (December 2019): 1079–93. Return to reference 10

Note 11: See Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Networks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Charles Tilly, Social Movements, 1768–2004 (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2004). Return to reference 11

Note 12: Janet E. Lord, “Disability Rights and the Human Rights Mainstream: Reluctant Gate Crashers?” in The International Struggle for New Human Rights, ed. Clifford Bob (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), pp. 83–92. Return to reference 12

Note 13: See, for example, Keisha N. Blain, “The Fight Against Racism Has Always Been Global,” Foreign Affairs 99:5: 176–81. Return to reference 13

Note 14: Jillienne Haglund and Ryan M. Welch, “From Litigation to Rights: The Case of the European Court of Human Rights,” International Studies Quarterly 65:1 (March 2021): 210–22. Return to reference 14

Note 15: On Amnesty International, see Stephen Hopgood, Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); and Ann Marie Clark, Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). Return to reference 15

Note 16: Amanda M. Murdie and David R. Davis, “Shaming and Blaming: Using Events Data to Assess the Impact of Human Rights INGOs,” International Studies Quarterly 56:1 (March 2012): 1–16. Return to reference 16

Note 17: Emilie Hafner-Burton, “Sticks and Stones: Naming and Shaming the Human Rights Enforcement Problem,” International Organization 62:4 (2008): 689–716. Return to reference 17

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Generally, international human rights treaties address separate issues, each of which is worthy of study. We first turn to a study of genocide and mass atrocities, since it was the reaction to the atrocities of World War II that led to the internationalization of human rights. Then we take up the issue of protection of women. That issue is instructive, as it involves the expansion of rights across time and space and it involves protection of rights in both the public and the private spheres.

Genocide and Mass Atrocities

The twentieth century saw millions of deaths from deliberate acts of warfare, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and physical violence against individuals. Yet the word to describe one kind of physical violence—genocide—did not even exist during the first half of the century. A Polish lawyer, Raphael

Lemkin, became so incensed by the destruction of Armenians in 1915 that he devoted his life to the human rights cause, penning the word genocide and then traveling around the world in support of an international law prohibiting it.

Armenians rally in the Little Armenia neighborhood of Los Angeles to commemorate the 104th anniversary of the Armenian genocide by Turkish forces during World War I. The claim of genocide is still contested. In 2021, the Biden administration reversed U.S. policy and declared the atrocities an act of genocide, joining with 29 other countries who have taken similar steps.

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It took the genocide of Jews and other "undesirables" during World War II to finally make the international community ready to act. In 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted. Genocide is defined as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group including killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions to bring about destruction of the group, preventing births within the group, or forcibly transferring children from the group to another group (see Box 10.1). While the convention was signed, ratified, and recognized as an advance in international human rights, like most legal conventions, it is both precise on some questions and vague on others. Such ambiguity often reflects disagreement among the parties during the negotiating process or an inability of the negotiators to reach a compromise. From one perspective, the convention is precise in terms of defining what constitutes genocide. The perpetrator of the genocide must have the intention to kill, and the killing or maiming cannot be an unintended result of violence or a random act. The targets of the violence must be a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. But from another view, the convention is vague. It does not specify how many people must be killed to be considered genocide. Nor does it specify what evidence is necessary to prove intentionality. The convention provides no permanent body to monitor potential genocides or any system for early warnings. How the

international community should respond is vague but requires that states must “prevent and punish” genocide in some way.

BOX 10.1

The Genocide Convention

ARTICLE 1?The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and punish.

ARTICLE 2?In the present convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a)?Killing members of the group;

(b)?Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c)?Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d)?Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e)?Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

ARTICLE 3?The following acts shall be punishable:

(a)?Genocide;

(b)?Conspiracy to commit genocide;

(c)?Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;

(d)?Attempt to commit genocide;

(e)?Complicity in genocide.

Despite the convention and the good intentions of the popular slogan “never again” in reference to the Holocaust, the international community has failed to act decisively in cases of purported genocide. One million Bangladeshis were killed in the 1970s; India intervened but did not stop the carnage. In the

1990s, over 800,000 Rwandans were killed while the small UN contingent on the ground watched. In the states of the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo, people of one ethnic group were forced to move, were sometimes killed or placed in concentration camps, and were raped, but the reaction by the United Nations and NATO proved ineffective in stopping the carnage. In Darfur in the early 2000s, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 400,000 people were killed and millions were forced to move. While the NGOs provided humanitarian relief, states failed to act decisively. A UN/African Union peacekeeping force was approved later, but it had a narrow mandate.

In the Rwanda and Darfur cases, major states adopted a concerted policy not to use the word genocide, cognizant that admitting these cases were genocide would necessitate international responses. Instead, at the outset these were framed as "ordinary" ethnic conflicts. In retrospect, it is clear they were anything but ordinary. Even when the NATO-backed coalition was organized to stop the ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo, NATO never used the word genocide to describe what was happening. Yet in 2021, the Trump administration, echoed by the Biden administration, labeled the Chinese government as committing genocide against the Uighurs and other minority groups. This designation is controversial given conflicting interpretation of what constitutes genocide and whether that designation then puts pressure on states and the international community to take action to stop the systematic abuse.18 Along with the prohibition against genocide came the codification of other crimes against humanity and crimes committed during warfare. These crimes against humanity are now incorporated in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (see Box 10.2).

BOX 10.2

Crimes against Humanity

ARTICLE 7?of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court reads as follows:

For the purpose of this Statute, “crime against humanity” means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

(a)?Murder;

(b)?Extermination;

(c)?Enslavement;

(d)?Deportation or forcible transfer of population;

(e)?Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;

(f)?Torture;

(g)?Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;

(h)?Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;

(i)?Enforced disappearance of persons;

(j)?The crime of apartheid;

(k)?Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

The former Yugoslavia illustrates the dilemmas associated with these terms and the different conclusions found after investigation of the events. In the early 1990s, the term ethnic cleansing was coined to refer to systematic efforts by Croatia and the Bosnian Serbs to remove peoples of another group from their territory. During 1992 and 1993, the UN Commission on Human Rights concluded that there were “massive and grave violations of human rights” and that Muslims were the principal victims. The Security Council Commission of Experts found that all sides were committing

war crimes, but only the Serbs were conducting a systematic campaign of genocide. But some states and many NGOs disagreed. In 2007, the International Court of Justice ruled that Serbia neither committed genocide nor conspired or was complicit in the act of genocide. The judges pointed to insufficient proof of intentionality to destroy the Bosnians. In 2015, the same court ruled that both Serbia and Croatia committed crimes, but the intent to commit genocide had not been proven.19 Labeling events an ethnic cleaning, a crime against humanity, or a genocide is not straightforward, yet the label has consequences, triggering a required response should genocide be identified.

Claims of possible genocide and war crimes continue to be heard. In 2019, the International Court of Justice heard Gambia v. Myanmar. Gambia, a majority-Muslim country, requested that the ICJ issue provisional measures for Myanmar to stop the killing of the Rohingya people, a Muslim minority in the majority-Buddhist country. Defending Myanmar was Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize winner; she argued that the government was attacking an extremist threat posed by an armed insurgency. In 2020, the ICJ issued provisional measures asking Myanmar to refrain from its actions until more legal arguments were heard. However, these changes are unlikely to occur, given the military coup that took place in 2021.

These cases—Rwanda, Darfur, former Yugoslavia, and Myanmar, even China—suggest that international efforts to prevent or stop mass human rights abuses have been relatively unsuccessful. When prevention is not possible, for practical or political reasons, the next issue is whether and how to punish the individuals responsible. That record, too, is inconsistent.

Punishing the Guilty Individuals

A key trend in the new millennium is that individuals responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity should be held accountable. This idea is not new. After World War II, the Allies convened trials to punish German and Japanese leaders for their wartime actions. However, because these trials were the victor’s punishment, they were not seen as

legitimate precedents. Following the atrocities in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the United Nations established two ad hoc criminal tribunals, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in 1993, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in 1994. These tribunals, approved by the UN Security Council, developed procedures to deal with the issues of jurisdiction, evidence, sentencing, and imprisonment. Because of the need to establish procedures and the difficulty in finding the accused, the trials proceeded very slowly. The Rwanda tribunal closed at the end of 2015 after indicting 93 individuals and sentencing 62. The Yugoslav tribunal closed at the end of 2017 having delivered 161 indictments and sentenced 90 individuals for committing genocide or crimes against humanity.

In light of the costs, more than $2 billion for the Yugoslav tribunal and between $1–2 billion for the Rwanda tribunal, the inefficiencies of the process, and limited cases heard, the courts were not viewed as satisfactory. Dissatisfied with these ad hoc approaches, states under UN auspices negotiated a permanent institution. The Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court (ICC) establishes an innovative international court having both compulsory jurisdiction (mandatory jurisdiction that states agree to) and jurisdiction over individuals (usually jurisdiction is over states).20 By the end of 2020, 123 parties had signed on to the Rome Statute. It covers four types of crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. No individuals (save those under 18 years of age) are immune from jurisdiction, including heads of states and military leaders. There are three ways the ICC can exercise jurisdiction over an individual's case: if the crimes were committed by the national of, or in the territory of, a state that is party to the Rome Statute, if a country directly accepts ICC jurisdiction for crimes in its territory (even if it is not a party to the Rome Statute), and if a case is referred to it by the UN Security Council. All three methods have been exercised. The ICC functions as a court of last resort, hearing cases only when national courts are unwilling or unable to deal with prosecuting grave atrocities.

In 2002, the Rome Statute entered into force. Twenty years later, the court had indicted 45 individuals, opened preliminary examinations in 12 cases, and tried 28 cases, some of them with more than one defendant. There have been nine convictions and four acquittals. Several ICC cases have received extensive attention given the offices the individuals held, including the warrants for Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir for actions in Darfur, Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, and the vice president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba. Some, but not many, perpetrators have been convicted. The convictions have also led to reparations paid to victims from the court's Trust Fund.

While it is a legal body, the court clearly exists in a highly politicized environment. Bemba's conviction was overturned, suggesting that the ICC is reluctant to convict state actors, only rebels. In 2016, Russia withdrew its support of the ICC after a preliminary investigation of alleged crimes committed by Russian and Georgian forces during the 2008 war. Most critically, African states, once supporters of the ICC, are increasingly skeptical of its neutrality, arguing that the court is applying double standards and selectively (and unfairly) targeting African leaders.21 South Africa, Gambia, Burundi, and the Philippines have all indicated their intentions to withdraw from the Rome Statute. Burundi and the Philippines have actually done so. The court also stepped into the political fray for its 2015 decision to admit Palestine as a member state and its 2021 decision that it has jurisdiction over the alleged war crimes committed by Israel in the occupied territories. Those decisions are being challenged as exceeding the court's jurisdiction. Such politicization seriously jeopardizes the court's legitimacy.

Has the ICC deterred would-be abusers? The question is not easy to answer. One study of the ten-year period before the ICC and the ten-year period after it finds that "actors who are concerned with their legitimacy in the eyes of domestic publics and/or the international community are much more likely to be deterred by the possibility of ICC prosecution than those who are not."22 But the really critical question is can the

ICC promote both justice and peace? Would the conflicts have ended sooner if there had been no call to punish perpetrators? Does justice lead to peace? Or is peace sacrificed in the name of justice? One empirical study using data from 2002 to 2013 finds that involvement by the ICC while conflict is occurring makes leaders less likely to negotiate a peace settlement; they will continue the conflict to evade punishment. However, if there is a perceived likelihood of strong domestic punishment, then investigation by the ICC is unlikely to hamper a peaceful settlement.23

While many supporters see the court as essential for establishing international law and enforcing individual accountability, the short-term impact has not been positive.24 Critics see the failure of the ICC to investigate China's actions against the Uighurs as a vast moral failure and the $2 billion spent for the few convictions as a travesty. Its critics claim that the court is "too bureaucratic, too inflexible, and lacking in leadership and accountability."25 As one commentator admits, "The ICC needs wins and it's racking up losses."26

Domestic courts are a viable option to the ICC. In 2016, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic found that the Islamic State destroyed the Yazidi community in Iraq through killings, sexual slavery, enslavement, and torture. With powerful allies and much publicity, the first trial against Iraqi nationals for aiding and abetting crimes against humanity was held in Germany. While the crime was not committed on German territory and neither the victims nor the perpetrator were German nationals, Germany claimed universal jurisdiction, arguing that the crimes committed harmed the international community and that the Rome Statute had been incorporated into German domestic law. In 2021, the German court convicted the defendant for committing crimes against humanity through torture.

Reconciling and Rebuilding: Truth Commissions and Hybrid Arrangements

Truth commissions are another approach that has gained popularity since their use in South Africa following the end of

apartheid. The idea behind such commissions is to have individuals tell the truth about what happened during the time of crisis. Once the truth is laid bare, a reconciliation process can begin. This approach is seen as appropriate in countries emerging from civil war where violence is widespread, where blame is apportioned to all sides, and where all parties must now live side by side. Increasingly, truth commissions are used in conjunction with other legal mechanisms, such as local courts (as in Rwanda and Bosnia) or hybrid courts, which blend international and domestic court procedures (as in Sierra Leone, Cambodia, and Lebanon).

The hybrid court in Cambodia is a typical case in which international law and domestic law are blended to hear allegations for crimes committed. In this case, under investigation are the crimes of the Khmer Rouge committed between 1975 and 1979. It has come under intense scrutiny for the price tag of $300 million for four convictions which are on appeal and another three in pretrial phrase. For law professor Philippe Sands, the question to ponder is, “to what extent has this tribunal contributed to beginning the process of embedding the idea of justice, the absence of impunity, into public consciousness, to help Cambodians transition to a better place?”27 The same assessment could be given for all the cases heard in the various tribunals.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is true of the status of “genocide” under international law? If enough people are killed, the killing does not have to be intentional to be considered a genocide.

Any systematic killing, even if not targeted at a specific group can be considered a genocide, if enough people are killed.

More than 1 million people must be killed for a mass killing to be considered genocide.

No specific number of deaths is specified to label a mass killing genocide.

Why are political leaders so hesitant to call certain situations a genocide? Once an ongoing incident is named a genocide,

states are obligated to intervene.

There have not been any genocides since the end of the Cold War.

The term genocide has no clear international definition.

Important states on the Security Council refuse to use the term genocide.

Glossary

genocide

the systematic killing or harming of a group of people based on national, religious, ethnic, or racial characteristics, with the intention of destroying the group

crimes against humanity

international crimes, including murder, enslavement, ethnic cleansing, and torture, committed against civilians, as codified in the Rome Statute

Endnotes

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Note 19: International Court of Justice, Case Concerning Application of Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro), ICJ Reports 2007, p. 43, www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/91/091-20070226-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf (accessed 2/9/18); and International Court of Justice, Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia), ICJ Reports 2015, www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/118/118-20150203-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf (accessed 2/18/18).

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Note 20: For an excellent study of the origins of the International Criminal Court, see Benjamin N. Schiff, Building the International Criminal Court (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For an updated analysis related to the U.S. position, see David Bosco, Rough Justice: International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Return to reference 20

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Note 23: Alyssa K. Prorok, "The (In)compatibility of Peace and Justice? The International Criminal Court and Civil Conflict Termination," International Organization 71:2 (Spring 2017): 213–43. Return to reference 23

Note 24: Patrick S. Wegnen, The International Criminal Court in Ongoing Intrastate Conflicts: Navigating the Peace-Justice Divide (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Return to reference 24

Note 25: Independent Report of ICC Member Countries, quoted in Marlise Simons, "International Court, Battered by Critics, Elects Briton as New Prosecutor," New York Times, Feb. 12, 2021. Return to reference 25

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THE GLOBALIZATION OF RIGHTS: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

The case of women's rights illustrates how human rights have moved from the national to the international agenda, how different types of rights have become interconnected, and how women's human rights touch directly on cultural values and norms. A UN poster prepared for the Vienna Conference in 1993 was headlined: "Women's Rights Are Human Rights." But this view has not always been the case.

From Political and Economic Rights to Human Rights

Women first took up the call for political participation within national jurisdictions, demanding their political and civil rights in the form of women's suffrage. Although British and U.S. women won that right in 1918 and 1920, respectively, many women had to wait until after World War II. Then the immediate priority of the UN and its Commission on the Status of Women following the 1949 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was getting states to grant women the rights to vote and hold office, as well as other rights guaranteed to all. More than a decade later, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) further articulated the standard, positing that discrimination against women in political and public life is illegal.

During the 1960s and 1970s, states paid more attention to economic and social rights for women. The development community had believed for many years that all individuals, including women, could participate and benefit equally from the economic-development process. Yet as experts examined statistics on economic and social issues relevant to women, they found that not to be the case. Men benefit disproportionately from the introduction of technology, whether bicycles or tractors, appropriating it for themselves. Women need policies specifically aimed at them.

The result was the women in development (WID) movement —a transnational movement concerned with systematic discrimination against women and the failure of development to make an impact on the lives of the poor. The movement

gained steam through four successive UN-sponsored world conferences on women, where women mobilized and networks developed enabling them to set a critical economic agenda affecting women, including equal pay, maternity protection, and nondiscrimination in the workplace. Under WID, the World Bank and virtually the entire UN system initiated programs for women's economic enhancement, and now that priority is found in most international assistance programs.28

CEDAW addresses both political-civil rights and a wide range of socioeconomic rights. Although 189 states have become parties to the treaty, a number of states have added reservations that clarify how the states will implement the treaty commitments. Many of those reservations protect the right of states to impose their own domestic laws with respect to the rights of women. States like Algeria and Egypt, along with many others, noted conflicts between CEDAW and their own domestic and family law codes and prioritized domestic laws reflecting religious and cultural values. As these reservations suggest, protection against human rights abuses in the private sphere remains very difficult to implement in some states where such protection conflicts with prevailing religious and cultural norms.

Continuing Violence against Women

Controversy also continues regarding gender-based violence against women. In 2021, the UN reported that an average of one in four women in the world aged 15 to 49 years have experienced physical or sexual violence, and in sub-Saharan Africa the figure is higher. Two examples illustrate this widespread and often controversial problem.

Rape is a prime example of violence against women. Several contemporary events highlight this unique form of violence against women: the rape of 2,000 Kuwaiti women by Iraqi soldiers during the 1991 Gulf War; the rape of 60,000 Bosnian women in 1993 by Serb and Croat forces; the rape of 250,000 women in Burundi's and Rwanda's ethnic conflicts in 1993–94. In 2017, the Islamic State is reported to have normalized widespread rape and torture of both Sunni Arab women and the Yazidis. Reports of rape committed by the Myanmar

military on Rohingya women continue. At earlier wartime trials, rape was not brought up as a war crime, even though states systematically employed it as an instrument of war during World War II. Only about one-third of the civil wars between 1980 and 2012 did not have large-scale sexual violence.

Yazidi women in the Kurdistan region of Iraq were the victims of crimes of rape, enslavement, and kidnapping perpetrated by the Islamic State, or ISIS. Many have been able to return home to their families, but women still demonstrate to garner support for the women who were subject to these crimes and those who still have not been returned home.

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Is rape part of a deliberate strategy of war, part of a systematic state policy? At the tribunal for Rwanda, Jean-Paul Akayesu was accused of gang rape and genocide. In a controversial 1998 decision, the judges issued the unprecedented ruling that rape constitutes not only a crime against humanity but also genocide. Now the statute for the International Criminal Court includes rape, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution among crimes against humanity, when such actions are part of a widespread and systematic attack against a civilian population. Despite this finding, critical questions persist: Is rape a strategy to build group cohesion among militias? Alternatively, is rape a product of opportunity—a crime, to be sure, but not a wartime strategy? Dara Kay Cohen, in Rape during Civil War, discusses these possibilities, using interviews with both victims and perpetrators in three conflicts.29 The issue garnered widespread public attention when Nadia Murad, a Yazidi survivor of rape, and Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynecologist, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for their work in bringing these abuses to the attention of the international community.

Rape is not just a wartime issue. In South Asia and the Middle East, the problem is particularly acute even during peacetime. In some places, the rape of women may be seen as an acceptable act of revenge for a prior wrong. The raped women, having been “dishonored,” may be subsequently killed.

Prosecution of the crime may be difficult, as in Pakistan, where a woman who has been raped may be convicted of adultery unless four male witnesses corroborate her rape story. The case of the gang rape of an Indian student in 2012 and her subsequent death brought the issue into the international limelight in a country where the definition of rape is vague, local police and government authorities fail to investigate, and prosecutors do not pursue cases vigorously. Under widespread public pressure, the Indian government fast-tracked the prosecution of that case and four perpetrators were hanged in 2020.

Physical assault against women is a problem in many parts of the world as well. The murder of two Mexican women in 2020 galvanized a social movement against femicide and gender-based violence. The murders were not isolated incidents—between 2015 and 2019, femicide rose from 400 to more than 1,000 killings per year. Demonstrations occupying universities and a nationwide women's strike took place, demanding government action. Like in Pakistan, India, and Russia, Mexican authorities have been criticized for their lax investigations and failure to bring perpetrators to justice. In the U.S. military, physical violence against female soldiers by their male counterparts has attracted widespread attention. While the military has taken measures to curb this abhorrent behavior, they have not been successful. There is movement to permit civilian authorities to handle cases of sexual assault.

With its accompanying lockdowns to contain the virus, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is being associated with escalating domestic violence against intimate partners and children. Reports from Australia, France, South Africa, the United States, Mexico, Chile, and Bolivia all suggest that increased economic pressures, restricted movements, and the inability to report abuses through regular channels have all led to an "invisible pandemic" of domestic violence.30

Increasingly, human rights NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International bring violations of women's rights to the attention of the international community, and public pressure is brought to bear. If state authorities fail to take these cases seriously, then the state, too, becomes complicit. But

given different cultural norms, private-sphere activities are much easier to hide and more resistant to change.

Trafficking in women and children is another form of gender-specific human rights violations. While prohibited under the CEDAW convention, the practice has become more prevalent, facilitated by open borders, pressures to keep labor costs low, and poverty that drives women and families to seek any kind of employment (including working in the sex trade). The number of women forced into sweatshop labor and domestic servitude is unknown, ranging between 12 and 27 million persons; about one-quarter of these are trafficked, many for the sex trade. This problem is especially vexing, because unlike rape, in which consent is not given, women may choose to be trafficked for economic reasons. Yet the international community, speaking through several treaties, has made this kind of exploitation illegal (see Table 10.1).

Although international standards against trafficking in women and children exist, monitoring and enforcement remain difficult. First, despite the international agreements, disagreement remains on the local level about what constitutes trafficking. Second, the clandestine nature of the problem complicates enforcement. Furthermore, the issue has been framed as both a human rights problem and a transnational crime issue. Various UNrelated groups responsible for monitoring and pressuring states, and anti-trafficking NGOs, are involved. They employ a variety of different strategies, including giving alternative employment opportunities to women, educating women on the dangers of trafficking, punishing the traffickers through incarceration, and providing stricter law enforcement across national boundaries.

In the long term, the solution to fully address discrimination against women, be it political, economic, or social, is to elevate women from their historically subordinate status to men. Liberal feminists see that progress has been made, as women have secured privileges that were once exclusively male prerogatives. The fact that both public and private abuses are the subject of media attention, concerted NGO activity, and state action also denotes progress. However, socialist feminists do not see as much progress as they point to the economic

forces that continually place women in a disadvantaged position. Encouragingly, virtually all condemn the various forms of both public and private violence against women, though their remedies for relief vary.

While the legal stage has been set by various human rights treaties and international organizations, the mainstay of enforcement will continue to be at the state level. And there, women's rights international NGOs have proven critical. According to an empirical study of over 1,500 such organizations from the 1990s to 2005, NGO shaming improved women's economic and social rights but had less impact on women's political rights.31 Such groups support specific policies—funding shelters, creating rape crisis centers, adopting legislation protecting vulnerable populations, and funding prevention programs.32

What is the linkage of the treatment of women at the individual level to the broader international relations questions? One prominent study that examined this micro-macro link finds that the best statistical predictor of state peacefulness is not democracy or wealth but the level of physical security for women. The higher the level of violence against women, the more likely the state is to be involved in interstate and intrastate conflict and the less likely the state is to be acting peacefully in the international system.33

Check Your Understanding

What is one of the most important international agreements specifically related to women's rights? Geneva III

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations

Which element of the women's rights movement has proven most controversial? prohibition of violence against women by armed forces during times of war

the creation of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights

protections against human rights abuses in the private sphere

promotion of economic development for women

Endnotes

Note 28: See Devaki Jain, Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Return to reference 28

Note 29: Dara Kay Cohen, Rape during Civil War (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016). Return to reference 29

Note 30: Caroline Bettinger-Lopez and Alexandra Bro, "A Double Pandemic: Domestic Violence in the Age of COVID-19," Council on Foreign Relations In Brief, May 13, 2020. Return to reference 30

Note 31: Amanda Murdie and Dursun Peksen, "Women's Rights INGO Shaming and the Government Respect for Women's Rights," Review of International Organizations 10:1 (March 2015): 1–22. Return to reference 31

Note 32: Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005," American Political Science Review 106:3 (August 2012): 548–69. Return to reference 32

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THE DEBATE OVER HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND R2P

Moving from articulating support for human rights in all their various manifestations to enforcing international human rights standards against abusers is fraught with difficulty. The just war tradition asserts that military action by states or the international community may be necessary to alleviate massive violations of human rights—such action is also known as humanitarian intervention. That position contradicts the Westphalian view of state sovereignty. Yet throughout history, states have applied military intervention on behalf of humanitarian causes, but on a selective basis. In the nineteenth

century, Europeans used military force to protect Christians in Turkey and the Middle East, though they chose not to protect other religious groups. And European nations did not intervene militarily to stop slavery, though they prohibited their own citizens from participating in the slave trade.34

Since the end of World War II, the notion has emerged that all human beings—not just particular groups—deserve protection, and traditionally states have had the responsibility to protect their own people, free from external intervention, as an essential feature of sovereignty. But in the 1990s, after humanitarian crises in Somalia and Rwanda, and following widespread murder, rape, and devastation in Darfur, Sudan, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, composed of scholars, high-level officials, and Canadian government personnel, changed the discourse. The document argues that if the state does not protect its own, then other states should do something, even using military force as a last resort, if authorized by the UN Security Council. That is the foundation argument of the responsibility to protect (R2P).

R2P is the idea that in cases of massive violations of human rights, when domestic avenues for redress have been exhausted and actions by other states might reasonably end the abuse, these states have a responsibility to intervene in the domestic affairs of the state in which the abuse is occurring. As two UN officials described the development of R2P, "[This] marks the coming of age of the imperative of action in the face of human rights abuses, over the citadels of state sovereignty."35

Like many international institutions, the responsibility to protect comes with its own set of problems. Can intervention be a legitimate response if it is used only selectively? In 2011, for example, why did the international community (the UN, NATO, and the Arab League) all voice support for military action against Libya's Colonel Muammar Qaddafi when he threatened "rivers of blood" against his opponents?36 But mass atrocities against the Syrian people beginning in 2011 by the regime of Bashar al-Assad did not lead to the same response. Might the danger be that all interventions in another state's affairs can ultimately be justified by R2P? After all, the

American government, when no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, justified the invasion by pointing to the ruthless regime of Saddam Hussein. And Russian president Vladimir Putin invoked a version of R2P in his justification for annexing Crimea in 2014—protecting the lives and property of ethnic Russians in Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine. When does the use of the term become a justification for a state or group of states to act in its national interest on issues having nothing to do with protection of individuals or groups?

Indeed, states differ over interpretation of the norm. When the UN Security Council approved the resolution authorizing measures to protect Libyan civilians, Brazil, India, China, and Russia abstained. Russia and China placed the highest priority on sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of states. When NATO acted to end Qaddafi's four-decade rule, Brazil expressed outrage that intervention for humanitarian purposes resulted in more civilian deaths. Brazil later supported an alternative concept, "responsibility while protecting," a case-by-case assessment of the consequences of military actions.37

Questions about R2P remain. How massive do the violations of human rights have to be to justify intervention? Who decides when to respond to the abuses? Might some states use humanitarian intervention as a pretext for achieving other goals? Should states have an obligation to intervene militarily in these humanitarian emergencies?

Given their experiences under colonial rule, many Asian and African countries are skeptical about humanitarian justifications for intervention by Western countries. Other states, such as Russia and China, have insisted that for a claim of humanitarian intervention to be legitimate, it must be authorized by the UN Security Council, where Russia and China have a veto. In practice, humanitarian interventions are often multilateral, although they do not always receive authorization by the UN. For instance, when Western states sought military intervention in Kosovo, Russia opposed the measure, so Western powers turned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) instead.

States that have supported humanitarian interventions in the past do not always support future interventions. This change in policy can occur for several reasons. Having suffered a humiliating setback in Somalia in 1993, for instance, the United States (and the UN) opposed increased use of the military to protect civilians in Rwanda in 1994, despite clear evidence of genocide. Similarly, only a small military contingent from the African Union was originally mobilized for the Darfur region. Other national interests were deemed more vital than support for humanitarian intervention: China cared about access to Sudanese oil; Russia cared about export arms markets; the United States was preoccupied with Iraq and the war on terrorism. In May 2012, a massacre of women, children, and even infants in Taldou, Syria, by the security forces of Syria's Bashar al-Assad caused an international outcry, but China and Russia opposed UN-sanctioned military intervention, fearing that any foreign intervention would only make the situation worse. Russia's and China's positions on intervention ultimately failed to halt international military intervention in the civil war in Syria (2012–present). This outcome may be why Russia later determined that its own military intervention in Syria was both necessary to reverse the chaos caused by U.S. and allied interventions, and just.

So although support for R2P is an emergent norm, it remains the subject of ongoing controversy. Because states do not intervene in all situations of humanitarian emergency, state sovereignty remains intact. But when gross violations of human rights are obvious, and when military intervention does not conflict with other national interests, states increasingly view humanitarian intervention as a justifiable use of force on behalf of human rights. Yet as Rosa Brooks reminds us, "Once you assert that every state can decide for itself that a military intervention inside another state's borders is justified, regardless of the Security Council, you're on a very slippery slope."38

Check Your Understanding

The norm that has developed in recent decades that if a state does not protect its own citizens, then other states should do something is known as _____. cultural relativism

intrastate war

the responsibility to protect (R2P)

refoulment

Which of the following reasons explain why R2P has been controversial? States object to the way it undermines sovereignty.

Foreign aid for economic development remains a low priority for many states.

Not all states consider genocide a crime.

There are specific measures to judge the extent of the human rights violations.

Glossary

humanitarian intervention

actions by states, international organizations, or the international community in general to intervene, usually with coercive force, to alleviate human suffering without necessarily obtaining consent of the state

responsibility to protect (R2P)

emerging norm that the international community should help individuals suffering at the hands of their own state or others when the home state fails to provide security

Endnotes

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Note 35: Shashi Tharoor and Sam Daws, “Humanitarian Intervention: Getting Past the Reefs,” World Policy Journal 18:2 (Summer 2001): 23. Return to reference 35

Note 36: Jonas Claes, Libya and the “Responsibility to Protect” (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011). See also Alex J. Bellamy, “The Responsibility to Protect Turns Ten,” Ethics and International Affairs 29:2 (2015): 161–85. Return to reference 36

Note 37: Paula Wojcikiewicz Almeida, “From Non-Indifference to Responsibility While Protecting: Brazil’s Diplomacy and the Search for Global Norms,” South African Institute of International Affairs Occasional Paper No. 138 (April 2013). Return to reference 37

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CONTENDING PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Former U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski noted in 1989 that the issue of human rights is “the single most magnetic political idea of the contemporary time.”39 But more than three decades later, is that still true? The rise of nationalist demagogic leaders, the rise of China as a hegemon generally unsympathetic to human rights, and poor governance have given rise to headlines, “A Post-Human Rights Era?”40 and “The End of Human Rights?”41 And reviews of recent academic research on the subject clearly challenge the progress in human rights, suggesting that the future of human rights may be precarious.42

Realists may not be surprised by this tentative reassessment. Realists point to the fact that states act on the national interest, which focuses on security rather than the protection of human rights. Indeed, as a former U.S. national security adviser warned, a wise policy maker would be moved not by emotions but by the calculation of the national interest.43 Decades later, the same sentiment was expressed by U.S. President Clinton in the face of the 1994 Rwandan genocide: “Whether we get involved in any of the world’s ethnic conflicts in the end must depend on the cumulative weight of the American interests at stake.”44 The focus on the national interest, realists would argue, can explain the lack of a coercive international response to egregious violations of human rights, as occurred with the United States regarding Rwanda, China regarding Darfur, and Russia regarding Syria. For many realists, such as Rosa Brooks, R2P is “irrelevant or pernicious.”45

However, if human rights violations committed by one state do jeopardize another state's national interest, then that state would have justification to act. For example, the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999 led to significant refugee flows into neighboring countries such as Albania and Macedonia. There was a major concern that the refugees, and thus the conflict, could extend as far as Greece and Turkey. A threat to European security interests therefore existed, and NATO undertook an air bombing campaign to help end the conflict. However, absent national security and geostrategic interests in the country violating human rights, realists would not expect a state to intervene in another state's matters to protect human rights.

Realists see the obstacles for human rights protections compounded by the fact that the international mechanisms established to address human rights shortcomings—be it the UN, the ICC, or even the ICJ—still all depend on states for enforcement. States, as sovereign entities, cannot be forced by these institutions to act. If they choose not to do so because it is not in their interests, action is unlikely to be taken in the face of human rights violations. As policy analyst David Rieff concludes, "… both R2P and the ICC look like just that: doctrines that are not possible in the world as it actually exists."46

Liberals are more likely to be optimistic about the possibilities for human rights protections, pointing to the successes that we have seen over time. In liberal analyses, domestic actors, international institutions, and NGOs play an important role in international politics. In the domestic realm, individuals and NGOs fighting for human rights can influence government policies. Indeed, human rights norms have been "deeply embedded in constitutional and other forms of domestic and regional law in almost every nation around the world."47 In many cases, this has translated to the international level. We have thus seen growth in international protections for women, children, minorities, and the disabled—policies pushed at the beginning by key domestic actors.

Liberal analyses would also point to the importance of multilateralism and international institutions. The exercise of

R2P and humanitarian intervention is likely to be more effective if authorized and implemented by international institutions. Hence, liberal analyses focus heavily on international institutions' actions with regard to human rights. This includes the UN as well as the ICC and regional organizations such as the European Union and African Union. Liberals recognize that states are still often the main actors, but they see that states' interests are more than just security interests. Interests in human rights protections can also spur state behavior—particularly multilateral behavior in international institutions.

Constructivists are likely to argue that human rights illustrate a central tenet of their perspective—that ideas matter and that ideas can change over time. The late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have seen human rights expanded, better articulated, and often contested. During that time, various human rights discourses have evolved and been framed to mobilize political movements or undermine claims of adversaries.48 However, constructivists acknowledge that change does not go in one direction. Human rights discourse can progress as it develops and as our ideas of R2P advance, expanding our notions of what qualifies as a human right. However, ideas about human rights can also regress when discourse focuses more on states' national interest.

Constructivists seek to explain the local, domestic, and international forces that propel the changes in discourse and ideas, and how states' responses to human rights abuses may reflect these broader changes. Among those broader changes is the constructivist notion of sovereignty. Since sovereignty is not absolute in the Westphalian tradition according to constructivists, it is contingent and changing as new issues like human rights emerge and evolve. How states, internal organizations, and nongovernmental organizations respond to human rights abuses shapes our conception of sovereignty just as it does our ideas about human rights protections.

Check Your Understanding

What is the constructivist view on human rights? It is a state's duty to intercede in cases of human rights violations.

Emerging norms around human rights demonstrate the power of ideas in international relations.

States believe that punishing human rights violations is not a high priority.

It is not a state's duty to intercede in cases of human rights violations.

Endnotes

Note 39: Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century (New York: Scribner's, 1989), p. 256. Return to reference 39

Note 40: Ingrid Wuerth, "A Post-Human Rights Era? A Reappraisal and a Response to Critics" Lawfare, March 22, 2019, www.lawfareblog.com/post-human-rights-era-reappraisal-and-response-critics (accessed 3/14/21). Return to reference 40

Note 41: David Rieff, "The End of Human Rights? Learning from the Failure of the Responsibility to Protect and the International Criminal Court," Foreign Policy 228 (April 2018): 16–19. Return to reference 41

Note 42: See the reviews in Daniel Braaten, "Human Rights: What Does the Future Hold?" International Studies Review 22:4 (December 2020). Return to reference 42

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Note 44: Quoted in Frontline, "Ghosts of Rwanda," PBS, April 9, 2004, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/script.html (accessed 8/12/20). Return to reference 44

Note 45: Brooks, How Everything Became War, p. 252. Return to reference 45

Note 46: Rieff, "The End of Human Rights?" 19. Return to reference 46

Note 47: Wuerth, "A Post-Human Rights Era?" Return to reference 47

Note 48: See Clifford Bob, Rights as Weapons: Instruments of Conflict, Tools of Power (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). Return to reference 48

IN SUM: FROM HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT

During the course of the last two centuries, the notion of human rights has been continuously reconceptualized as people have become more aware of abuses against individuals and groups and believe that "others" deserve protection. Protecting human rights is not always successful as principles of state sovereignty, primacy of national interests, and cultural practices often collide with human rights issues.

Human rights is not the only issue that is continuously transforming. So, too, has people's relationship to the environment been transformative, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

Which rights do you think should have priority? Political-civil rights? Socioeconomic rights? Collective rights of groups? Why?

Find two newspaper articles that provide examples of state officials abusing the rights of their citizens. Do these citizens have any recourse?

Genocide is sometimes difficult to prove. Choose a specific case of state-sponsored violence (e.g., the Assad government in Syria against its citizens or the Chinese government against the Uighurs). Does the violence qualify as genocide? What evidence would you have to collect to answer that question?

If you were a woman whose human rights were being abused, what avenues of recourse might you use to make your case?

How can R2P be stated in more concrete terms so that it is clearer when the international community should intervene—and when it should not (in the name of preserving state sovereignty)?

Key Terms

crimes against humanity (p. 374) cultural relativism (p. 356) genocide (p. 373)

humanitarian intervention (p. 384) International Bill of Rights (p. 359) international humanitarian law (p. 358) responsibility to protect (R2P) (p. 384)

Glossary

crimes against humanity

international crimes, including murder, enslavement, ethnic cleansing, and torture, committed against civilians, as codified in the Rome Statute

cultural relativism

the belief that human rights, ethics, and morality are determined by cultures and history and therefore are not universally the same

genocide

the systematic killing or harming of a group of people based on national, religious, ethnic, or racial characteristics, with the intention of destroying the group

humanitarian intervention

actions by states, international organizations, or the international community in general to intervene, usually with coercive force, to alleviate human suffering without necessarily obtaining consent of the state

International Bill of Rights

the collective name for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

international humanitarian law

a body of law comprised of the four Geneva Conventions and protocols protecting individuals during war, including wounded military, prisoners of war, and civilians

responsibility to protect (R2P)

emerging norm that the international community should help individuals suffering at the hands of their own state or others when the home state fails to provide security

11

The Environment

*

In 2018, Greta Thunberg, a Swedish teenager and advocate for the environment, began a school strike to protest government inaction on climate change. Since then, students across the world have joined Thunberg in strikes, protests, and marches, such as the one pictured here, in Stockholm, Sweden.

In 2018, a fifteen-year-old activist in Sweden, Greta Thunberg, began sitting outside the Swedish parliament during school days to protest government inaction on climate change. These protests sparked a global movement, dubbed "Fridays for Future," of school-age students demanding their governments take greater action to fight climate change. In the fall of 2020, Fridays for Future called for a worldwide climate action day. Millions of youth mobilized, and on September 25, demonstrations pressing for climate action took place in over 3,500 cities in 154 countries. All around the world, the call for climate action is being raised by the youth: "There can be no Plan B because there is no planet B."1

While the organizations have many names—the Sunrise Movement, Earth Uprising, Extinction Rebellion, as well as Fridays for Future—their demands to their governments are similar: create a pathway to keep the global temperature rise under 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to preindustrial levels, ensure climate justice and equity, listen to scientists, and adhere to the guidelines in the Paris Agreement. As Thunberg pleaded at the World Economic Forum in 2019, "I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic … I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is."2

Climate change is not the only threat to the environment. Natural resources are being depleted; forests are being razed; access to freshwater is severely limited in some places; plants and animal species are disappearing; and air and water

pollution are rampant. These threats affect the quality of our individual and collective lives. Without these necessities—air, water, and land—peoples' physical security is at risk.

In this chapter we discuss the issues the environment faces and what policies have been developed to address them. We examine why these policies are so difficult to implement in an interdependent world where no one state can solve the problem and where states themselves have conflicting interests. In doing so, we use many of the core concepts of international relations: sovereignty, state and human security, collective goods, sustainability, and international cooperation and conflict, among others.

*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Use key theoretical concepts like collective goods and sustainability to describe the dilemmas by those interested in environmental issues.

Describe the main international environmental issues that threaten the world today.

Describe the different approaches to addressing climate change and international efforts to carry them out.

Explain the difficulties that are precluding states from cooperating on environmental issues.

*

Endnotes

Note 01: Original quote from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in presentation at Stanford University, reported in Aaron Sekhri, "UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon Addresses Mali, Syria, Women's Rights at Stanford," The Stanford Daily, January 18,2013, https:www.stanforddaily.com/2013/01/18/ban-urges-international-cooperation-to-solve-global-challenges/ (accessed 3/25/21). Return to reference 1

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January 25, 2019, www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate#:~:text=I%20want%20you%20to%20panic.,you%20would%20in%20a%20crisis (accessed 2/11/21). Return to reference 2

CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

Two conceptual approaches introduced in earlier chapters can help us think critically about the interrelation of environmental issues. First is the notion of collective goods, introduced in Chapter 9. The concept of collective goods helps us think about how to achieve shared benefits that depend on overcoming conflicting individual interests. How can individuals, like the herders who each have an incentive to increase the number of sheep grazing on the commons leading to its depletion, be convinced to abridge their own self-interest in the interest of preserving the commons?3 How can individual polluters of the global air and water commons be likewise convinced to abridge their self-interest to preserve these commons? One difficulty is that our most influential economic theories—rooted in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, published in 1776—originated at a time when the global air, sea, and natural resources seemed infinite.4 Yet by the close of the nineteenth century, this seemingly infinite supply of space and resources had become bounded. Since the end of World War II, we have come to understand that our planet itself is a commons, and as such, we must reassess the collective impact of our individual self-interests and individual choices.

The second conceptual approach is sustainability, or sustainable development, introduced in Chapter 8. Sustainability helps us think about advancing our survival without doing lasting damage to our environment and thereby endangering the health and welfare of our descendants. As a conceptual approach, sustainability reminds us that it is possible, desirable, and even necessary to value the future quality of the earth's air, water, and land. Both approaches underline the most fundamental problem facing those committed to slowing and ultimately reversing damage to the

global ecosystem: because the costs of harm to the environment are diffused across both space and time, and the benefits of pollution and unsustainable resource consumption are concentrated and immediate, each individual state, corporation, or person has a strong incentive to enjoy a "free ride" and hope others will bear the costs of restraint. Free riding and cheating are very difficult to detect and monitor. Worse still, the effects of cheating may last for years, even after it has been detected and halted. It is these characteristics which make environmental problems so difficult to address.

By studying three key environmental topics—climate change, natural resource issues, and pollution of the commons—we can see how promoting economic growth, supporting human rights, and protecting the environment often conflict and have potential effects on state security. Although each topic may be treated separately, and often is, they are all integrally related.

Check Your Understanding

What conceptual perspective, which explores the fact that short-term incentives can go against the long-term interests of the collective, can help international relations scholars analyze the nature of some environmental problems? collective goods

environmental security

natural resources security

Earth first

_____ involves simultaneously advancing our survival and welfare without doing lasting damage to the environment. Viability

Functionalism

Sustainability

Collectivity

Endnotes

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Note 04: Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (New York: Modern Library, 1937). Return to reference 4

THE ENVIRONMENT AS AN ISSUE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Degradation of the environment has been an important issue for centuries. Civil society associations formed as early as the late 1800s to protect particular species and lobby in support of environmental concerns. The scientific revolution enabled people to begin to collect data monitoring environmental trends. However, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the environment as an issue emerged on the international agenda. Several events dramatically publicized the deteriorating quality of the environment and motivated action.

The oceanographer Jacques Cousteau warned of the degradation of the ocean, a warning made prescient by the 1967 Torrey Canyon oil spill off the coast of England. Rachel Carson's bestselling 1962 book Silent Spring warned of the impact of pesticides and chemicals on the environment.5 Carson highlighted the paradoxical effect of pesticides such as DDT—which could dramatically reduce the spread of diseases like malaria, but at the same time devastated the reproductive cycle of wildfowl and ultimately caused cancer in humans. Millions of Americans and many others worldwide, who had never thought about the links between pesticides, the ecosystem, and human health outcomes, were suddenly aware of these connections and became concerned about the damage. More people became aware that human activity associated with agricultural and industrial practices was degrading the natural world, and that humans do not exist separately from the natural world. They saw that in addition to the positive consequences of economic development in agriculture and industry for job and wealth creation, human activity also has negative externalities—costly unintended consequences. This led to a number of developments at the state and international level designed to address various environmental issues.

Institutionalizing Environmental Protection

Following the warnings of the twentieth century, a series of soft law principles regarding the environment began to develop in customary international law, often expressed in conferences, declarations, or resolutions, which are not legally binding but may become so in the future. One core principle is the no significant harm principle, meaning a state cannot initiate policies that cause significant environmental damages to another state. Another is the good neighbor principle—that states should take care to avoid acts or omissions that could reasonably be foreseen to cause harm to neighboring states. Though they are nonbinding, these principles informally describe acceptable norms of behavior. Other, less institutionalized norms have also evolved over time, including the polluter pays principle (those causing the pollution should be responsible for cleaning it up, or curtailing it), the precautionary principle (action should be taken based on scientific warning before irreversible harm occurs), and the preventive action principle (states should take action in their own jurisdictions to avoid harm to the environment).

The burgeoning scientific and social consciousness regarding the environment also led to more concrete developments. In 1972, the Nordic countries, under the auspices of the United Nations, convened the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. In doing so, they effectively put environmental issues on the international and various national agendas for the first time. New environment-oriented NGOs and the scientific establishment were spurred into action. At the domestic level, environmental ministries were established, often after intense international pressure to do so. Such ministries empower environmental interests, provide a legal framework for action to protect the environment, and help to coordinate a state's environmental policies and its international approach.6 Along with these developments, the emergence of so-called "green" political parties provided environmental issues a permanent political home in many democracies.

In response to the rise of the environmental agenda, new international bodies were formed and older intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) began to take on environmental issues. Following the Stockholm conference, the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP) was established with a small professional staff supported by a voluntary budget. Its aim is to collect data to warn the international community of potential problems, provide a platform for negotiating international environmental agreements, monitor concluded agreements, and manage particular programs like those protecting regional seas.

These international bodies began ratifying numerous treaties and agreements on a host of different issues (see Table 11.1). They include the protection of natural resources, such as endangered species of wild fauna and flora, tropical timber, natural waterways and lakes, migratory species of wild animals, and biological diversity in general. Other treaties deal with protection against polluting in marine environments, on land, and in the air as well as issues such as ozone depletion and climate change. Each of these treaties sets standards for state behavior, and some provide monitoring mechanisms. These treaties are controversial because they affect core political, economic, and human rights interests, but ultimately, it is individual states that must enforce them.

Institutionalization continued in 1991 with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), designed as the prominent funder of environmental projects in low-and middle-income countries. GEF funds cover the cost differential created by including environmental objectives in projects that did not originally consider protecting the environment. GEF funds also help low-and middle-income countries meet the commitments made under various international treaties, including those on organic pollutants, ozone depletion, and climate change.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the World Bank is the largest multilateral donor for economic development. Beginning in the 1960s, the bank was criticized for financing projects that led to environmental degradation—including its Amazon basin development project in Brazil, Indonesia's relocation of its population from Java to neighboring islands, and its financing of large dams. Only in the mid-1990s did the bank establish a mechanism for investigating claims of environmental harm caused by bank projects and augment financing for

environmental projects. However, it is still questionable whether bank officials are examining projects according to their environmental impact or whether these assessments are merely politically correct. Is the bank “green or greenwashed”?7 An analysis of 274 World Bank projects found that the projects that addressed local environmental priorities (water and sanitation projects) were more successful compared to those addressing global issues such as climate change or biodiversity. Local constituencies held the bank to account for the former, while the latter projects lacked a local constituency. Yet monitoring the activities of such organizations as the World Bank may not be enough. Imposing sanctions for deleterious environmental behavior is often necessary, and that depends on actions taken by states.8

TABLE 11.1

Selected Global Environmental Agreements

CONVENTION

ENTERED INTO FORCE

NUMBER OF RATIFICATIONS (by 2020)

GENERAL

UN Convention on Biological Diversity

1993

196

CLIMATE CHANGE

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer

1987

198

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer

1988

198

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

1994

197

Kyoto Protocol to Framework Convention

2005

192

POLLUTION

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter

1975

87

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution

1983

51

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal

1992

187

Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

2004

184

Minimata Convention on Mercury

2017

116

PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURES AND SPECIES

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

1948

88

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

1975

183

International Tropical Timber Agreement

1983

74

Trade agreements are another institutional way to address environmental problems. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) instituted in 1995 was known at first as more environmentally friendly than other agreements. It required each party to maintain its own level of environmental protection and ban imports produced in violation of those standards. However, NAFTA's environmental protections were limited. Environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexico border were not covered. And its environmental measures could not be applied in an "arbitrary or unjustifiable manner" or "constitute a disguised restriction on international trade or investment," and the complaining party must prove the violation affects international trade. In disputes, drawing on these provisions, the interests of multinational corporations tended to be supported over the parties alleging violations of environmental regulations.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which replaced NAFTA, became effective in 2020 and addresses some of these shortcomings. It eliminated the requirement that a complaining party must prove the violation affects international trade, and a $600 million fund was allocated to address environmental problems in the region. However, Canada had wanted more progressive environmental protections, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) believe the agreement does not go far enough to address environmental issues.

Despite the creation of these various institutions to help protect the environment, a tension between the developed North and developing South—a tension manifest from the Stockholm conference—afflicts UNEP, the GEF, the World Bank, and various trade agreements. The Global South argues that many, if not most, environmental problems result from

rampant industrialization in the Global North; thus, the North should pay for cleanup and not prevent the economic development of the South. It is that fundamental disagreement that has led to “inaction and disappointment” especially in UNrelated environmental organizations.9

While IGOs and trade agreements have taken important steps to address environmental issues, they are relatively weak. That, together with the tension between states over economic development and environmental sustainability, has opened up space for NGOs, which have played a vital role since the 1960s. Since then, their numbers have grown, their interests have become more varied, and their strategies have become more diversified.

NGOs act as international critics, using the media to publicize their dissatisfaction and get environmental issues onto international and state agendas. NGOs may function through IGOs, working to change the organizations from within. For example, NGOs transformed the International Whaling Commission from a body that limited whaling through quotas into one that banned whale hunting altogether. NGOs can aid in monitoring and enforcing environmental regulations, by either pointing out problems or actually carrying out onsite inspections as authorized under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), described below. NGOs also function as part of a larger epistemic community—a transnational community of experts and technical specialists from international organizations, NGOs, and state and substate agencies that share a set of beliefs. These communities share expertise, notions of validity, and a set of practices organized around solving a particular problem.10 In addition to working within epistemic communities, NGOs have also become active in domestic-bargaining processes, fostering learning among government elites.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, NGOs attempt to influence state environmental policy directly, providing information about policy options, sometimes initiating legal proceedings, and lobbying directly to a state’s legislature or bureaucracy. But in the long run, it is still states that have

primary responsibility for taking action. In some cases, states have been somewhat successful; in others, they have not. And failure may not be an option. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminds us, “For too long, we have been waging a senseless and suicidal war on nature. The result is three interlinked environmental crises: climate disruption, biodiversity loss and pollution that threaten our viability as a species.”11

Check Your Understanding

The international community has been increasingly affected by _____, the costly unintended consequences of economic development in agriculture and industry. resource degradation

negative externalities

unproductive growth

sustainable development

Which of the following is true of international treaties on the environment? They deal only with issues related to pollution.

They set standards for state behavior but do not specify monitoring mechanisms.

They do not affect economic interests.

They are controversial.

Glossary

negative externalities

term for costly (harmful) unintended consequences of exchange

soft law

nonbinding norms of state behavior; may or may not eventually become hard or obligatory law

epistemic community

community of experts and technical specialists who share a set of beliefs and a way to approach problems

Endnotes

Note 05: Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). See also Jacques Yves Cousteau with Frederick Dames, The Silent World (New York: Harper & Row, 1953); and Cousteau with James Dugan, The Living Sea (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). Return to reference 5

Note 06: Michael Aklin and Johannes Urpelainen, "The Global Spread of Environmental Ministries: Domestic-International Interactions," International Studies Quarterly 58:4 (December 2014): 764–80. Return to reference 6

Note 07: Catherine E. Weaver, Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 21. See also Mark T. Buntaine and Bradley C. Parks, "When Do Environmentally Focused Assistance Projects Achieve Their Objectives? Evidence from the World Bank Post-Project Evaluations," Global Environmental Politics 13:2 (2013), 65–88. Return to reference 7

Note 08: Mark T. Buntaine, "Accountability in Global Governance: Civil Society Claims for Environmental Performance at the World Bank," International Studies Quarterly 59:1 (2014), 99–111. Return to reference 8

Note 09: Ken Conca, An Unfinished Foundation: The United Nations and Environmental Governance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 3. Return to reference 9

Note 10: Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," International Organization 46:1 (Winter 1992): 3. Return to reference 10

Note 11: Quoted in United Nations Environment Programme, "Making Peace with Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity and Pollution Emergencies," February 18, 2021, www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature. Return to reference 11

CLIMATE CHANGE

Some environmental issues such as climate change are particularly intractable: they affect the entire globe, but their

effects may not be felt by everyone at the same time. No one state is able to address the problem alone, yet both the quality of human life and the chances for human survival are potentially impacted. And the actions taken today may not be effective until well into the future. For these reasons, climate change is a particularly difficult issue for states to cooperate to address. But on another global issue—ozone depletion—cooperation was forged. That story of relative success provides an interesting comparison to the problem of climate change.

Before climate change emerged as the most significant issue of the twenty-first century, the issue of ozone depletion arose after being thrust onto the international agenda in 1975. It serves as a useful template for examining the issue of climate change. Key powerful states eventually recognized the problem—that global emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in aerosol sprays and refrigerants were becoming concentrated in the polar regions. This led to a thinning of the ozone layer over the earth, meaning that the protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays that cause skin cancer and cataracts, among other things, was becoming depleted. Strong measures were needed to curb the deleterious effects of CFCs. Developed countries of the North acknowledged primary responsibility for the problem and private companies were able to develop substitutes for CFCs at an affordable price. The North promised the South financial aid to make necessary changes in technology. In the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, states agreed to prohibit the use of CFCs and an international monitoring system was established. The depletion of the ozone layer was largely reversed.

The story is, in part, a success story; consumption of ozone-depleting substances has decreased 75 percent since the Montreal Protocol. Outside the polar zones, the ozone layer is recovering, though at the poles, the loss is varied. Complete recovery could take decades after the harm has stopped. But that success has had an unintended consequence. CFCs were replaced with manmade hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). While those do not deplete the ozone and last for only a short time,

they do contribute to global warming—the major environmental issue of the twenty-first century.

The Problem of Climate Change

The issue of global climate change has proved much more complicated than ozone depletion. There are no inexpensive substitutes for agricultural, communications, and industrial processes that emit greenhouse gases. Moreover, the costs of reducing emissions are high and must be paid now, while the benefits are diffuse and may emerge only after decades. But scientific facts are indisputable: the preponderance of greenhouse gas emissions comes from the burning of fossil fuels in the industrialized countries of the North, and increasingly from China and India. In fact, in 2021, it was reported that China's 2019 greenhouse emissions surpassed all those of the developed world combined, even including the United States. Greenhouse gases are also emitted by the South, most notably from deforestation of the tropics for agriculture and the timber industry (see Figure 11.1). These greenhouse emissions and the emissions of methane from livestock, waste, and broken pipelines have consequences.

FIGURE 11.1

Carbon Dioxide Emissions by Region and Major States (in billions of metric tons)

Source: Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, "Annual Total CO2 Emissions, by World Region," Our World In Data, ourworldindata.org (accessed 3/29/21).

*

The earth is warming, with a projected increase of between 1.9 and 3 degrees Celsius estimated by the end of the twenty-first century. This increase may seem insignificant, but that acceleration in atmospheric and ocean warming has resulted in glacial and ice sheet melting and sea level rise, as well as rising temperatures on land and the exponential increase in the number of extreme weather events like hurricanes, floods, and fires. And there is 95 percent certainty in the scientific community that climate change is influenced by human behavior. Since 1970, more than three-quarters of greenhouse

gas pollution—the major cause of the temperature increases—comes from carbon dioxide emissions from the fossil fuels industry and other industrial sources. To keep the temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius, global (net) human-caused emissions from carbon dioxide need to fall by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by 2050. This requires a rapid and far-reaching transition, so warns the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Established in 1988 by the UN Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization, the IPCC provides regular scientific assessments of the physical science and the impact of adaptation and mitigation measures based on examination of thousands of scientific studies from around the world.12

Climate change has a human cost, and particular geographic areas are especially affected. Siberia, with a population of 5.4 million people, has warmed by more than 3 degrees Celsius. The permafrost has melted, river flooding has decimated cattle and reindeer herds, and the longer and hotter dry summers have resulted in huge forest fires, affecting air quality across Russia and Scandinavia. Australia has likewise been severely impacted by the warming of the Tasmanian Sea, with subsequent decline in fisheries and the death of coral reefs, as well as the persistent heatwaves leading to drought and forest fires. And as warmer temperatures continue for longer periods of time, accompanied by periodic droughts, the incidence of forest fires increases with devastating results, as seen in the U.S. states of California, Oregon, Washington, and Colorado during 2020.

Around the world, small island states and states with low elevations near the seas are particularly vulnerable. They already see their land subsiding and their national territory shrinking, and their populations are experiencing higher rates of waterborne diseases. For small island states dependent on tourism, these effects have an impact on the livelihood of the population. In the Maldives, where 95 percent of the labor force is involved in tourism, or in the Bahamas, where 70 percent is dependent on tourism, tourists stay away when beaches erode, coral reefs are polluted, and the quality of

drinking water declines. Rising temperatures impact health—higher temperatures are associated with the persistence of dengue fever, Zika, and West Nile virus in such places as Nepal, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Honduras. Furthermore, sea level rise is occurring at 1.22 inches per decade. At that rate, up to 2 billion people could be climate refugees from rising seas by 2100, a topic discussed in Chapter 12.

Although scientists increasingly agree on the problem—that contemporary industrial, agricultural, and communications processes have aggressively accelerated global warming—and the evidence of its harm exists in the damage to states—politicians and economists struggle to find solutions. This is not surprising, given the competing interests of various parties. Industrialized countries seek continued growth, and the South wants to become industrialized and enjoy the North's consumer lifestyle; both are made possible by converting oil and gas to energy. The parties disagree on whether voluntary restraints or market-based responses will be sufficient for both "worlds" to reach their economic objectives while at the same time reducing greenhouse emissions (that is, achieve sustainable growth). If a cooperative global response proves insufficient, might authoritative regulations be needed, and if so, what authority should be invoked to monitor and enforce them, and at what level—international, state level, subnational, or even local?

Approaches to Climate Change Mitigation

The international community has made several attempts to respond to climate change through negotiated state action focusing on mitigation—policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance carbon sinks (a natural element or environment that absorbs more carbon than it releases). One of those efforts was the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which provided for stabilizing the concentration of greenhouse gases and delineated international goals for reducing emissions by 2010. European states and Japan signed the Kyoto Protocol promising cuts in greenhouse emissions and establishing the EU Emissions Trading System as a way to reduce further emissions. In a complex arrangement riddled with problems,

states that use less than their allowance may sell credits to others that are not meeting their obligations.

The protocol came into force in 2005, but without U.S. support. The George W. Bush administration argued that the economic costs of moving away from a fossil fuel–based economy would be too high and an unacceptable number of U.S. jobs would be lost. Furthermore, India and China were not obligated to cut greenhouse gases under Kyoto, as they were classified as developing countries. In the Bush administration's view, because they would not have to bear the costs of greenhouse gas mitigation, these states would gain an unfair economic advantage.

Given the difficulties with the Kyoto Protocol, some commentators suggested that a comprehensive global treaty may not be feasible. The European Union recognized as early as 2009 that such a binding approach with specific targets and a timetable for mitigation may not be effective to address such a multifaceted problem characterized by so many conflicting interests. Given that reality, Robert Keohane and David Victor argued that what is needed is a kind of middle ground that focuses on key parts of the climate change problem rather than the whole.13 Such a strategy characterized climate change negotiations for almost a decade. For instance, conserving forests was the priority in 2008. Recognizing that forests were sinks that reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, states agreed that states that protected forests would be acknowledged as doing their part to reduce emissions. Technology and financing were the topics in 2009, when the parties agreed to focus on new technologies and increase financing to mitigate the effects of climate change.

At the same time, given the fatal flaw of Kyoto in not including key polluting states of the South, another approach was to try to get the top three emitters—China (the top emitter), the United States, and India—to come to agreement on key emission issues. In 2013, India agreed to take on legally binding obligations, but not until after 2020, fearful that such obligations would inhibit growth. In late 2014, China agreed for the first time to stop its emissions from growing by 2030, and the United States announced new targets for

reducing carbon emissions. These commitments proved to be a critical impetus for commitments by other states in the 2015 UN Paris climate change talks. These events showed the key importance of top-level leadership taking the initiative.

In December 2015, following two weeks of intensive negotiations, the 195 participants in the Paris climate change talks reached an accord replacing the Kyoto Protocol. They responded to France's then president François Hollande's expressed urgency: "Never have the stakes been so high because this is about the future of the planet, the future of life."14 In a grand bargain, states agreed in the Paris Agreement to keep the increase in global average temperature to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as recommended by the scientists in the IPCC. The targets essential to reach that goal are aspirational: abandoning fossil fuels by 2050 and supporting growth in renewable sources of energy. States agreed to curb the emission of greenhouse gases, as well as to promote carbon-absorbing sinks like forests. Perhaps most importantly, states agreed to a process to ensure transparency and accountability by publishing climate plans every five years, beginning in 2020. While the submission of plans is mandatory, meeting the mitigation targets in those plans is not legally binding. Finally, participants agreed that key developed countries should take the lead. As part of this commitment, the developed countries agreed to support the efforts of developing countries to mitigate climate change, with a $100 billion Green Climate Fund. The agreement entered into force in 2016. In the end, what made the Paris Agreement possible was the earlier negotiations between the United States, India, and China, whereby China agreed to curb its emissions over the long term, and the various conferences which forged consensus on specific issues.

Supporters of the Paris Agreement recognized that global warming and climate change are not solved by this agreement, and that the goals it delineated were aspirational. Indeed, to even reach this agreement (and other such agreements) state negotiators resorted to constructive ambiguity and deliberate imprecision in some of the treaty language. The agreement

was flexible and included provisions to further study and revisit issues that states disagreed on.15 Nevertheless, most negotiators believed that a structure now existed to tackle the problem in an effective way. By approving a voluntary and a bottom-up approach, states choose targets for themselves rather than having binding requirements imposed on them from the international level.

However, the agreement suffered a setback when in 2017, U.S. president Donald Trump announced a plan for the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and discontinue financial support for the climate fund. At that time, the administration asserted that American jobs would be negatively affected by the agreement and that the "imposed" regulations undermined American energy independence. The decision was controversial because the agreement had strong support from those in the business community already heavily invested in green technology, environmental NGOs, private transnational regulatory organizations like the Carbon Disclosure Project, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and the Global Reporting Initiative,16 and from key U.S. states like California (the world's sixth-largest economy). Thirty-four other states including New York and Massachusetts have forged memos of understanding with Mexico, Canada, and various provinces of Canada to coordinate in their efforts to curb emissions.

In 2021, under the Biden administration, the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement and the administration proclaimed its wish to reprise global leadership on climate change. To that end, President Biden virtually convened the Climate Leaders Summit, joined by the leaders of 40 countries. He announced a new U.S. goal of cutting U.S. greenhouse emissions in half by 2030. In an all-government and society-wide effort, the United States promised to ratchet up its commitments to reduce harmful emissions from various sources and invest in renewable energy and infrastructure, leading to the goal of net zero emissions by 2050. At the same time, the United States would continue to pressure China, India, and Brazil, among others, to do likewise.

Parties to the Paris Agreement have been strengthening their commitments to reduce or limit greenhouse emissions (GHG). In 2020, the European Union announced a new goal, reducing its emissions by at least 55 percent from its 1990 level by the year 2030; the long-term goal is to be climate neutral by 2050. About 30 percent of the EU budget for the years 2021–27 is allocated for that purpose. In the same year, Japan committed to net zero emissions by 2050. In a tectonic shift, China announced a new target of carbon neutrality by 2060. But in each case, the devil is in the details: choosing different timing for net-zero emissions and different methods of aggregating emissions leads to different outcomes.17 But providing targets and monitoring progress to achieving them represents a positive step taken in the Paris Agreement. Experts agree, however, that even with these commitments, the pledges may not be ambitious enough to meet the goal by 2100.

The Paris Agreement went into effect on November 4, 2016. The Arc de Triomphe in Paris was lit up in green to celebrate the enactment of the agreement. However, many of the goals of the Paris Agreement remain out of reach.

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The difficulties of reaching mitigation targets and the urgency of global warming have led other groups to argue for a novel approach that gives participants a strong incentive to cooperate and penalizes those states that refuse to cooperate. A so-called "Climate Club" would include states who agree on a target carbon price and penalize those that do not by imposing tariffs on imports from nonparticipants. Such a club would address the free riding problem of earlier agreements: punish those who receive the benefits without contributing to the costs.18

Given the weaknesses of many mitigation approaches, some scientists suggest more dramatic actions are needed as last resort measures. Geoengineering—which involves large-scale manipulations of the physical, chemical, or biological systems to reduce levels of atmospheric gas—provides an example of such a measure. Geoengineering strategies under investigation include insertion of vertical pipes in the ocean to increase downward heat transport, spraying aerosols of sulfate particles

into the stratosphere to reduce solar radiation, and even spreading rock dust on agricultural grounds to pull carbon dioxide from the air. These expensive and unproven technologies are being considered only since international negotiations have proven so disappointing, with major emitters falling behind in making domestic changes to meet the targets suggested by the science community.

Climate Change Adaptation

Adaptation to climate change means shifting resources into preparing for and remediating the effects of climate change. Measures include using scarce water resources more efficiently, developing drought resistant crops, and achieving energy efficiency by increasing the use of renewable sources. Since 80 percent of the world's population lives near a coastline and some states are already vulnerable, adaptation strategies include evacuating some neighborhoods, building flood defenses, and raising dikes. Under the 2013 European Union Adaptation Strategy, member states committed to building resilience against climate shocks, adopting stronger building codes to protect from extreme weather events, and providing insurance coverage. The Netherlands has adopted unique approaches, not only constructing levee walls to protect against rising waters but also using less concrete to permit water seepage and constructing reservoirs and parking garages for alternative water storage. The EU commits funding for similar projects in developing countries.

Major cities around the globe have also committed to reducing their vulnerability to extreme weather events. Following superstorm Sandy in October 2012, New York City has retrofitted hospitals and warehouses and improved protection of transit facilities. Similar actions have been undertaken in London, Chicago, Rotterdam, Quito, and Durban, among others. Some of these initiatives are reactive—taken after a disastrous event; others are proactive, initiatives to prepare for the inevitability of climate change. For vulnerable poorer states, the financial costs of these kinds of initiatives are often too high.

Climate change is an issue that brings with it both very real threats and opportunities in the twenty-first century, and any efforts to counter climate change will proceed slowly. The problem is made more difficult by the time horizon: the significant costs of both trying to mitigate climate change and adapting to climate change are borne by the present generation, but the benefits of mitigation and adaptation will often accrue to future generations. Such is not the case with most natural resource issues whose deleterious effects are felt locally or regionally and in the present. Issues of freshwater resources and protection of forests and species affect us today.

Check Your Understanding

What do the issues of ozone depletion and global warming have in common? They are not a source of disagreement between states.

They have not been the subject of international negotiations.

They are not issues that stem from negative externalities of economic development.

They are not issues confined to a single state.

What is the Montreal Protocol? a statement by Canada about the negative impact of greenhouse gas emissions

an international agreement designed to limit emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas

an international agreement designed to limit the emission of ozone-depleting substances

an international agreement designed to limit the burning of fossil fuels

Glossary

mitigation

policies designed to reduce greenhouse emissions

geoengineering

large-scale manipulations of the physical, chemical, or biological systems to reduce the levels of atmospheric gases

adaptation

shifting resources into preparing for and remediating effects of climate change

Endnotes

Note 12: Various reports from the IPCC, including the most recent, can be found at www.ipcc.ch/ Return to reference 12

Note 13: Robert Keohane and David Victor, “The Regime Complex for Climate Change,” Perspectives on Politics 9:1 (March 2011): 7. Return to reference 13

Note 14: Quoted in Ben Brumfield and Michael Pearson, “COP21 Climate Change Summit: ‘Never Have the Stakes Been So High,’” CNN, November 30, 2015, www.cnn.com/2015/11/30/europe/france-paris-cop21-climate-change-conference/index.html (accessed 3/15/21). Return to reference 14

Note 15: Susan Biniaz, “Comma but Differentiated Responsibilities: Punctuations and 30 Other Ways Negotiators Have Resolved Issues in the International Climate Change Regime,” Michigan Journal of Environmental & Administrative Law 6:1 (2016): 37. Return to reference 15

Note 16: For discussion of new organizational forms emanating from climate change, see Kenneth W. Abbott, Jessica F. Green, and Robert O. Keohane, “Organizational Ecology and Institutional Change in Global Governance,” International Organization 70:2 (Spring 2016): 247–77. See also Thomas Hickmann, Rethinking Authority in Global Climate Governance: How Transnational Climate Initiatives Relate to the International Climate Regime (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

Return to reference 16

Note 17: Joeri Rogelj, et al., “Net-Zero Emissions Targets Are Vague: Three Ways to Fix,” Nature, March 16, 2021. Return to reference 17

Note 18: William Nordhaus, “The Climate Club: How to Fix a Failing Global Effort,” Foreign Affairs 99:3 (May/June 2020):10–17. Return to reference 18

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

The belief in the infinite supply of natural resources was not unreasonable throughout much of human history, as people migrated to uninhabited or only sparsely inhabited lands. Trading for natural resources became a mainstay of economic activity once people recognized that natural resources were not uniformly distributed. Marxist thinkers challenged the assumption of an infinite supply of key economic resources. According to Lenin, one of the reasons for imperialism was the inevitable quest for new sources of raw materials. Capitalist states depended on overseas markets and resources, precisely because resources are unevenly distributed. From this assertion, Lenin also drew his explanation for why imperialism necessarily resulted in war: capitalist states would be compelled to use armed force to secure the natural resources their factories demanded.

Today, we are keenly aware that natural resources are limited: they are limited by nature and by people's own actions of polluting those very resources on which they depend. And sometimes states compete for those resources, leading to violence.

Freshwater Resources

Perhaps the most crucial transnational resource issue is freshwater because it is necessary for all forms of life—human, animal, and plant. Only 3 percent of the earth's water is fresh (one-third lower than in 1970) and it is unevenly distributed, making it a highly politicized issue. Water is also unequally used: agriculture accounts for about two-thirds of the use of water, industry about one-quarter, and human consumption slightly less than one-tenth. Some new technologies may also be using freshwater faster than it is replenished. The use of water as an aid to natural gas and petroleum extraction (a process most commonly known as fracking) threatens shortages in some locales and has caused contamination issues. By 2050, the global demand for freshwater is predicted to increase by 40 percent and one quarter of the world's population will live in countries facing moderate or severe water-shortage problems. While some

states enjoy abundant supplies of freshwater, 1.1 billion people have no access to improved drinking water, and one-third of those live in Africa. The importance of the freshwater issue came to the fore in 2019, when over 15 countries were deemed to be in extreme water stress. Cities like Sao Paulo, Brazil; Chennai, India; and Cape Town, South Africa were days away from running out of water for their population—a situation described as "terrifying."19

Three examples illustrate the international controversies and repercussions of the limited supply of freshwater. First, the Middle East has long been an area where freshwater is a contested resource. Since the 1960s, Israel has adopted methods to preserve scarce water resources, adopting drip irrigation, recycling 86 percent of its wastewater, and piping water long distances from the north to the parched Mediterranean coast. The country has been a leader in desalination: now one-third of the country's drinking water comes from seawater. But that does little to help the Palestinians on the West Bank who are not connected to Israel's water grid. With a doubling of the population, Palestinians have access to less than the recommended amount of freshwater. The situation is dire in the Gaza Strip, where inadequate infrastructure has resulted in polluted water. The water problem has been exacerbated by 15 years of drought out of the past two decades and a growing population rate. There is no solution to the water crisis in either the West Bank or Gaza without Israel's participation. Yet the political conflict between Israel and Palestine complicates the issue, and Israel's solution—desalination—depends on solar energy which would need enhanced financing if it were to be used to help Palestine.

Freshwater is a scarce resource in the Middle East, but political dynamics between Israel and the West Bank exacerbate the issue for Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. Here, a man fills containers with freshwater in a refugee camp in Gaza.

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A second conflict over water surrounds Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam, which it began to construct in 2011 on the

Blue Nile River, the Nile River's main tributary. Under a colonial era agreement, Egypt and Sudan got most of the Nile's waters for their own use, while Ethiopia was not given a water allotment despite being located upstream from the other two. The Grand Renaissance Dam would change that historic allocation. When completed in 2023, it will be Africa's largest hydropower dam, encompassing 685 square miles, at a cost of $4.8 billion. Egypt, the downstream state, which relies totally on the waters of the Nile River, views the anticipated lower river flows as an existential threat to its national security. Farmers depend on scarce water for production of rice, a major food source. Ethiopia, however, contends that its actions, viewed as necessary for the country's economic development, are consistent with the no significant harm principle described above. Egypt has threatened sabotage and bombing to protect the livelihood of its population, though its official position is that it wants to reach a diplomatic solution. However, in 2020, Ethiopia accused Egypt of sponsoring cyberattacks to disrupt the process of filling the dam, stating its own intention to mobilize millions to defend the dam. There is yet to be a water sharing agreement among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, even as the dam is filling.

The third example involves the Mekong River. With its origins in Tibet, the river serves as the rice bowl and fishing grounds for the inhabitants along its banks in Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. But the construction of 11 upstream dams in China affects the rate of flow along the river, the balance of its nutrients, and the quality of the water reaching downstream users. Extraction of sand is also denigrating the environment. Chinese demand for sand, an essential component of cement, fertilizers, steel, and cosmetics, has led to riverbed erosion in the lower Mekong. Erosion and increasing seawater intrusion threaten crops and fields, making farming problematic in the lower delta. In 2019, a drought hit the lower Mekong region, and the levels of the river dropped to their lowest point in a century. China blamed the drought, but a study funded by the U.S. State Department showed that the upper area of the river actually received above-average precipitation, and that Chinese dams were to blame for the low water levels downstream. The Mekong

River Commission, an intergovernmental organization established by Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to coordinate management of the river, responded skeptically to the report saying that more scientific evidence was needed before such conclusions could be drawn. The governments of these states were similarly reticent to blame China outright.

The reaction presents an interesting comparison to the politics surrounding the Grand Renaissance Dam project. Neither Ethiopia nor Egypt has significant economic or political leverage over the other. The conflict over the dam has thus led to strong headbutting between them. Countries along the Mekong are highly dependent on China for trade and investment. In the context of this asymmetric power dynamic, political leaders in the countries downstream must tread lightly, even in the face of severe economic and environmental problems caused by the Chinese dams.

As freshwater becomes more scarce and as river systems are impacted by diversion of water for other uses, freshwater has become a major international issue. A study of over 300 river treaties negotiated since 1950 found that water quantity and quality issues such as found in the Mekong, the Nile, the Rhine, and the Colorado rivers are the most difficult to resolve. These issues also have a high probability of noncompliance because of incentives to free ride and the difficulties in identifying noncompliant states.20

Protecting Land Resources: Forests

Protection of forests, especially endangered tropical forests, has been on the international agenda since the 1970s. The rate of deforestation has been stubbornly high over the last several decades. In 2019 alone, almost 12 million hectares of tree cover were lost in the tropics. And in 2020, over 7 percent more trees were lost than the year before, even as COVID-19 raged and many economies were locked down. Deforestation has significant consequences for the environment: soil is eroded, crops are incapable of regeneration, animal species are lost, and biodiversity is threatened. In some places where forests are cut or burned to make way for ranches and agriculture, the area is subjected to more intense flooding as

the soil is left unprotected, and the fires create unacceptable air pollution. The process of deforestation also creates greenhouse gas emissions. While alive, trees are a major carbon sink, but when trees are burned or cut down, the absorbed carbon is released into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Beyond its environmental effects, deforestation is also a direct threat to indigenous communities who live in the forests and depend on the plant and animal resources found there to sustain their way of life. Some indigenous communities are even evicted from the forests before the clear-cutting begins.

Indonesia is an example of a country experiencing deforestation, accompanied by burning of its ancient peatlands. An estimated 12 percent of Indonesia's territory—mainly forest and peatland—has been razed to make way for palm oil production. Massive forest fires have plagued the country for decades and persist today: in 2015, over 10,000 square miles were burned; in 2019, 6,200 square miles burned. Given that deforestation and the burning of carbon-rich peatlands release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, they have a particularly deleterious effect for countries such as Indonesia that face a significant threat from climate change. Indonesia is one of the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, releasing the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent to the annual emissions of Great Britain. However, by 2029 it is predicted that Indonesia will be one of the first developing tropical countries to feel the direct effects of climate change. Rice production and fisheries will decline; flooding along the 50,000 miles of coastline will increase; and intense storms and saltwater intrusion will deplete agricultural and forest resources.

Perhaps most troubling, recent research has revealed that rain forest destruction has occurred most rapidly after the end of military conflicts. After conflict, there is a rush to clear forests and make money quickly. In at least four countries—Peru, Sri Lanka, Ivory Coast, and Nepal—the average annual forest loss was 68 percent greater in five years after conflict had ended than before. Such an acceleration was also evident in the Aceh province in Indonesia after the end of the decades of fighting. Similarly, in the years after the peace agreement with the

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) was signed, Colombia's rain forest tree cover disappeared at three times the rate as the year before the treaty was signed.21

But even in relatively more stable countries like Ukraine and Brazil, deforestation is occurring. Since 2001, logging in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine has increased over 300 percent, with over one-third of it illegal activity. The timber is exported for foreign exchange. But as the mountains are denuded, floods have become more frequent with greater intensity.

Two approaches to quelling the rate of deforestation have been promising. One approach advocated by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) targets the demand side. Since its founding in 1993 as an independent voluntary arrangement, the FSC sets sustainable standards for the forest products industry by pressuring retailers of timber products and consumers to refrain from buying wood from unsustainable sources. The FSC provides certification for that sustainability. Rainforest Action Network, a NGO, likewise tries to change consumer behavior by shaming companies for their practices: Home Depot has been targeted for selling old-growth wood and Burger King for buying Brazilian beef produced after deforestation in the Amazon.

A second approach addresses the supply side, working with forest communities themselves by promoting and paying for tree planting and by providing incentives for forest management. Local indigenous communities are encouraged to pay individuals to protect the forests, while permitting some cutting, farming, and hunting to sustain their livelihoods. One study of 42 such programs in sub-Saharan Africa finds that involving local community in the planting and giving local community ownership leads to the highest levels of success. It was the community that would then monitor, enforce, and distribute benefits. Funding for such programs is provided by international sources.22

Protection of Species

Protection of species is perhaps the oldest of natural resource issues. After all, it is protection of birds which prompted the

formation of some of the first NGOs—the Society for the Protection of Birds in 1889, the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire in 1903, and the Commission for the International Protection of Nature in 1913. Up until the early 1970s, most international agreements dealing with this issue were very specific, advocating protection for a particular species or a local problem. Since the 1970s, agreements have broadened, but that has not always led to more effective outcomes.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESThe Environment: A View from Brazil

Brazil is home to 40 percent of the world's tropical rain forests and 20 percent of its freshwater supplies, and it is the center of the world's known biodiversity. These resources are located in the Amazon basin, a 115,000 square mile area, the size of Italy. That area is recognized as a critical carbon sink and a major temperature regulator for addressing climate change. For Brazil, it is a key resource.

While indigenous peoples inhabited the Amazon for thousands of years, industrialization of the basin began between 1896 and 1910 with the tapping of rubber trees.

In the 1970s and 1980s, exploitation of the resources in the Amazon basin for development became widespread. Supported by the Brazilian government and subsidies from the World Bank, the Trans-Amazon highway began construction in 1972. This enabled hundreds of thousands of migrants from southern and central Brazil to settle in the region and farm small plots of land. When poor soil made those farms unsustainable, forest land was cleared in the northeast to support commercial soybean fields and cattle ranches for beef production. Timber companies cut large tracts of mahogany trees and other valuable timber products. Mining companies found large deposits of bauxite, kaolin, and iron ore. Plans for an extensive network of hydroelectric dams made in the 1970s, stalled for environmental considerations, were now authorized. With the region booming, the government recognized the need to protect the basin. It passed the National

Environmental Policy in 1981 and established the Ministry of the Environment in 1985. Over the years, hundreds of environmental laws were passed.

Between 2003 and 2014, the Brazilian people saw the fruits of development. More than 29 million people were lifted out of poverty, and the income of the poorest 40 percent increased by 7.1 percent. The government also made some progress in environmental preservation. There was a gradual decline in the rates of deforestation.

But when commodity prices fell, Brazil underwent a period of economic stagnation, leading the country to exploit the Amazon basin once more. Beginning in 2015 and every year since, big business, ranchers, and farmers have cleared more land by burning off vegetation. Despite this, Brazil signed the Paris Agreement in 2016, pledging to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 43 percent by 2030 compared to 2005 figures. However, government enforcement of environmental protections was weak.

The Amazon then was well under attack when Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in October 2018. Bolsonaro, a fiery populist and nationalist, affirmed that the Amazon rain forest belongs to the Brazilian people and is under their sovereignty, and therefore it is a resource for them to be able to exploit. International environmental agreements were perceived as foreigners trying to tell them what to do with the rain forest. As one expert noted, "There are people, especially among the 20 million people who live in the Amazon, who think: 'Environmentalism has gone too far, we need to make a living, these regulations are too onerous, there's too much land set aside for the indigenous, and we want to go in and deforest, whether it's for land speculation, for agriculture for pasture, or logging."a

Bolsonaro, a "climate skeptic," encourages this view, referring to the climate agenda as a "global conspiracy." Thus, the government has taken measures to weaken environmental regulations, encouraging miners to prospect for gold in areas protected for indigenous tribes and awarding squatters land

titles. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on land use were relaxed even further.

Fearing a global calamity should the devastating fires of 2019 not be extinguished, European governments offered assistance and additional funds to Brazil. This reinvigorated a long-standing, still-lingering fear in Brazil—that Brazil's sovereignty over the rain forest was being threatened. President Bolsonaro firmly rejected the offers of help from Europe and reaffirmed Brazilian sovereignty.

Some government officials have denounced Bolsonaro's Amazon policies and demonstrators have urged restraint on business practices. Brazilian companies are under pressure to honor their deforestation commitments under supply chain agreements. In response to criticism levied in 2020, the president sent in 4,000 military personnel to the region to prevent environmental crimes. Some see it as a public relations ploy, taken for fear of being identified as an "environmental villain."

Overall, the Brazilian sentiment is fairly clear. Brazil is proud of its native vegetation and its agriculture. Bolsonaro's government believes each can be managed sustainably.

Deforestation in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The case illustrates the tension between development sustainability for Brazil and environmental sustainability for the international community. Explain the tension.

Leaders matter. When a new president takes office, what policies do you expect to see in the Amazon?

Conduct research on the various positions held by the indigenous communities in the basin.

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For example, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity specifies three goals: conservation of biodiversity across all ecotypes, sustainable use of biodiversity, and fair and

equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources stemming from that biodiversity. The treaty enumerates targets to be achieved through voluntary means, relying on the idea that states can be socialized to accept new norms of behavior. But that treaty illustrates an inherent dilemma: on the one hand, recognition of the principle of national sovereignty over domestic resources; and on the other, the obligation of states to conserve biological diversity. What if the state's need for a particular resource leads to a diminution of biological diversity? Brazil and Indonesia, among others, have clearly prioritized state sovereignty.

Among the most consequential treaties is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), ratified in 1975. Now covering 5,800 species of animals and over 30,000 species of plants, the treaty provides for three different levels of protection. The most endangered species, those threatened with extinction, may not be traded. These include the African elephant (and ivory) and rhinoceros. Species not in immediate danger but which may be unless trade is controlled, like polar bears and grizzly bears, may be traded under licenses. Other species are regulated domestically, but international cooperation is encouraged. Parties meet every two years and can adjust the levels of protection in accordance with new data.

Unlike many environmental treaties, CITES includes several implementation mechanisms. One arm, TRAFFIC, works directly with governments to provide monitoring, training, and education for wildlife-trade enforcement officers. It helps states like Kenya and South Africa to expand anti-poaching units. It also seeks to curb demand in East Asian countries (particularly China) for animal parts used in traditional medicine. Proving most intractable are the trade in rhino horns and elephant tusks. In 2018, China reneged on its obligations under CITES and extolled the virtues of ancient Chinese medicine, arguing the necessity of using animal parts for medical healing. So there is a significant trafficking in these species' parts from Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America. The underground-market ivory trade is responsible for the deaths of 20,000 elephants annually. In 2020, the trade

in jaguar parts was on the rise from Mexico to Argentina and Bolivia. That rise in trafficking of endangered jaguars is correlated with an increase in private investment from China.

Despite international efforts to protect the earth's biological diversity, a 2021 report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (referred to as the IPCC for biodiversity), based on findings from 50 countries, finds that almost one million animal and plant species are being threatened with extinction within decades. Transformative change is needed.23 Many countries are pushing the goal to protect 30 percent of the planet's land and water by 2030.

Check Your Understanding

The long-standing and widespread belief in the infinite supply of key economic resources was challenged by Marxists.

constructivists.

realists.

behavioralists.

Freshwater is a highly politicized natural resource problem because it is concentrated in the Middle East, an area characterized by significant conflict.

it is concentrated in Africa, an area characterized by significant conflict.

it is unequally distributed and unequally used.

human consumption accounts for almost all water usage.

Endnotes

Note 19: For a comprehensive review of the water crisis, see "Thirsty Planet," The Economist, March 2, 2019, 5–14. Return to reference 19

Note 20: Jaroslav Tir and Douglas M. Stinnett, "The Institutional Design of Riparian Treaties: The Role of River Issues," Journal of Conflict Resolution 55:4 (2011): 606–31. Return to reference 20

Note 21: Jon Emont, “The Nemesis of the Rainforests: Peace,” Wall Street Journal, March 30–31, 2019, C4. Return to reference 21

Note 22: Travis R. Reynolds, “Institutional Determinants of Success Among Forestry-Based Carbon Sequestration Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa,” World Development 40:3 (2012): 542–54. Return to reference 22

Note 23: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, “Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating,’” May 2019, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report. (accessed 3/26/21). Return to reference 23

Note a: Quoted in Sinéad Baker, “Brazil Has Angrily Attacked Offers to Help It Put Out the Huge Fires in the Amazon—Here’s Why It Is Pushing Back against Global Outrage,” Business Insider, August 27, 2019, www.businessinsider.com/amazon-rainforest-fires-why-brazil-pushing-back-outrage-2019-8 (accessed 3/16/21). Return to reference a

POLLUTION OF THE COMMONS

Two important commons that we all share are the air and oceans. What one state does that affects these commons affects all states. But each state has an incentive not to impose costs on its own industries to avoid pollution of these commons, instead free-riding on the efforts of others. Similarly, each state has an incentive not to incur costs to clean up pollution that does exist, free-riding on the efforts of others to do so. Pollution of the commons is therefore a central problem in the international system that requires coordinated efforts to address.

Air Pollution

The reality of air pollution was brought into stark relief during the lockdowns in the spring of 2020 when cities like Los Angeles, Beijing, and New Delhi, known for their thick, polluted air, were photographed with clear skies. While most instances of extreme air pollution are treated domestically, air

does cross national borders and can quickly become an international issue. Indeed, it was smelter smoke emanating from a mining and smelting company in Canada which polluted the air in the state of Washington in the United States that generated one of the first international legal suits, known as Trail Smelter arbitration, U.S. v. Canada.24 Later it was acid rain caused by air transport of harmful particles from power plants which led to conflicts between the United States and Canada, and among European countries. In Europe, such conflicts led to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution in Europe (1979). That treaty set emission ceilings for several air pollutants, including nitrogen oxide, heavy metals, and sulfur oxide. Since 1990, there has been a general downward trend of emissions of all pollutants in Europe. But the global effects of air pollution persist.

For example, air pollution from Indonesia's forest fires remains a major problem. The 2015 fires and the accompanying haze cost Indonesia $16.1 billion in losses. Schools and hospitals were closed due to poor air quality. The fires resulted in haze over Indonesia as well as neighboring Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore, causing a persistent regional crisis. It has been estimated about 100,000 people will die prematurely due to smoke inhalation from that fire season. In India, too, over 1.5 million deaths were attributed to outdoor air pollution in 2019.

Arising in part from Indonesian air pollution, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional IGO, has broadened its scope to include environmental issues. In 2003, ASEAN concluded the Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution calling for penalties for noncompliance and a monitoring fund. Indonesia became the last ASEAN member to ratify the agreement in 2014. However, two factors suggest that ASEAN will not be effective in changing Indonesian behavior, even though some countries have criminalized conduct which causes or contributes to air pollution. First, ASEAN lacks enforcement authority; it is an organization based on the "ASEAN Way"—consensus-based decision making and noninterference in domestic affairs. Second, ASEAN's own research has found that many of the properties

associated with the Indonesian fires are owned by Malaysian or Singapore investors. Conflicting interests are more likely to result in stalemate than actual policy change.

Ocean Pollution

Changes in another commons—the ocean—have stemmed from other problems such as climate change and pollution from land-based sources. Ocean warming is one such negative change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in 2019 after analyzing thousands of research studies that oceans are warming and ice sheets shrinking. Oceans have absorbed excess carbon dioxide to make seawater more acidic and hold less oxygen, which affects sea life. In addition, absorption occurs unevenly, creating hot spots with particularly warm sea temperatures (up to 9 degrees Fahrenheit above normal)—most notably in the Pacific Ocean around Australia, in the Mediterranean, and in the Atlantic Ocean off New England. For the fisheries in the tropics, ocean warming may result in lower yields, affecting the livelihood of fishing communities, and a decline in a key protein source for coastal populations.25 Since different species of fish live in specific water temperatures, fishing stocks are on the move, crossing different political boundaries, leading to more conflict among states. Since World War II, a quarter of militarized disputes between democracies have been over fisheries:26 the cod wars between Iceland and Great Britain and the new mackerel conflict between Norway, the Faroe Islands, the EU, and Iceland are examples.

Pollution of the oceans from land-based sources in the North is also occurring. New studies of microplastics used in personal care products and pellets for manufacturing—plastic fragments less than 5 millimeters in length—have found hot spots in the ocean off Southern California, in the Mediterranean, in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, and off the Maldives. The fear is that these fragments embedded in the sediment disrupt fish reproductive cycles and stunt growth. The explosion in the use of plastics during the COVID-19 pandemic worries researchers. Used latex gloves found in rivers, surgical masks on beaches, and personal protective equipment, even if it is properly disposed of, may lead to a

future microplastic catastrophe. While more research is needed, the fear is that these microplastics will move through the food chain, affecting the health of not only fish but eventually humans as well.

Agricultural activities on land also pose a threat to the ocean commons. For example, agricultural subsidies from the European Union have led to the cultivation of more land and a greater tendency to augment the soil with nitrate and phosphorus-rich fertilizers. Studies show that the use (some say overuse) of these fertilizers in Poland and neighboring countries explains the intensification and subsequent decay of algae in the Baltic Sea. The resulting "dead zones" have led to fish life starved of oxygen.27

Climate change, the depletion of natural resources, and pollution are all posing challenges to the global commons. Many of these problems are transnational in nature, requiring coordinated state actions to address them. But the need for international cooperation is not the only major facet of environmental issues—some are known to actually lead to outbreaks of violent conflict.

Check Your Understanding

In 2003, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) broadened its scope to include environmental issues. What issue led the ASEAN states to do so? air pollution from Indonesia's fires

water pollution from Vietnam's shipping fleet

the conflict over islands in the South China Sea

Chinese damning upriver on the Mekong River

Which country's overuse of fertilizers due to the increase in land dedicated to farming under the European Union's agricultural subsidies has led to severe problems in water quality in the Baltic Sea? Ireland

Great Britain

Norway

Poland

Endnotes

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Note 26: Sara McClaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Beyond Territorial Contiguity: Issues at Stake in Democratic Militarized Interstate Disputes," International Studies Quarterly 43:1 (March 1999):169–83. Return to reference 26

Note 27: Matt Apuzzo, Selam Gebrekidan, Agustin Armendariz, and Jin Wu, "Growing at Europe's Subsidized Farms: Pollution," New York Times, December 26, 2019, 1, 8–9. Return to reference 27

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONFLICT

Realists and economic nationalists clearly recognize that controversies over natural resources and resource scarcity may lead to violence and even war. Jared Diamond's book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed documents how the struggle for scarce resources led to the collapse of empires in the past and to state failure in Rwanda and Burundi, resulting in the abrogation of human rights.28 Political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon modeled how the degradation of renewable natural resources may lead to violence: as resources such as freshwater or arable land decline in quality or quantity, individuals and groups will compete for these vital resources, resulting in violent conflict.29

Perhaps more extreme than renewable resources, nonrenewable resources such as oil may lead to particularly violent conflicts, because such resources are vital for industry, economic health and welfare, and national security, and there are few viable substitutes. How else can we explain the conflict over remote and uninhabited islands in the South China Sea? Only with the possibility of oil, rare earth minerals, or other natural resources beneath the waters surrounding the islands does the conflict make sense. Changes in the distribution of these resources may lead to a shift in the

balance of power, creating an instability that may lead to war, just as realists fear.

In addition to conflicts over natural resources, Homer-Dixon added that climate change may also lead to insecurity and violence. Focusing on this link between climate change and violent conflict, an intriguing 2018 study integrating both qualitative and quantitative research on climate change and violent conflict in East Africa acknowledges the underlying realities in the region: a history of violence and widespread poverty, coupled with a high dependency on natural resources and limited capacity to adapt. But going into more detail, the authors find there are four key ways that climate change relates to violent conflict in that region: "worsening livelihood conditions; increased migration and changing pastoral mobility patterns; tactical considerations by armed groups; and elite exploitation of local grievances."30 In short, as people's livelihoods are threatened by climate change, exaggerated by droughts and torrential downpours, communities migrate to accommodate the new conditions, often moving to lands that are contested. Armed groups in the region are also able to exploit local grievances and perhaps find individuals ready to use violence to change their situation. This analysis confirms the evidence offered by New York Times journalist Jeffrey Gettleman. Generalizing from an analysis of the land-conflict relationship in Kenya, he finds "Population swells, climate change, soil degradation, erosion, poaching, global food prices and even the benefits of affluence are exerting incredible pressure on African land. They are fueling conflicts across the continent, from Nigeria in the west to Kenya in the east."31 The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review in 2014 recognized that the effects of climate change can spur violence and even enable terrorists by intensifying underlying societal problems.32

Overall, a 2017 study of all the empirical studies about the relationship between climate change and conflict explains that a majority of studies (62.3 percent) find evidence that climate variables—significant alterations in temperature and precipitation patterns—are associated with higher levels of violent conflict. However, divergent methodologies and

operationalization of key variables make systematic assessment of the studies problematic, leaving open the question of the extent of the relationship between climate change and conflict.33

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is true of the relationship between environmental issues and conflict? A majority of empirical studies have found that climate change variables are associated with higher levels of violent conflict.

Despite theoretical arguments to the contrary, a majority of empirical studies have shown that population growth is associated with higher levels of violent conflict, but not climate change variables.

A majority of empirical studies have found that natural resources are associated with higher levels of violent conflict, but not climate change variables.

Despite theoretical arguments to the contrary, a majority of empirical studies have shown that there is no relationship between environmental issues and conflict.

Endnotes

Note 28: Jared Diamond, Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (New York: Penguin, 2005). Return to reference 28

Note 29: Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence and Cases,” International Security 19:1 (Summer 1994): 5–40. Return to reference 29

Note 30: Sebastian van Baalen and Malin Mobjork, “Climate Change and Violent Conflict in East Africa: Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research to Probe the Mechanisms,” International Studies Review 20:4 (December 2018): 549. Return to reference 30

Note 31: Jeffrey Gettleman, “Disappearance of Fertile Land Fuels ‘Looming Crisis’ in Africa,” New York Times, July 30, 2017, 1. Return to reference 31

Note 32: United States Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review, p.12, http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_quadrennial_defense_review.pdf (accessed 3/26/21). Return to reference 32

Note 33: Kendra Sakaguchi, Anil Varughese, and Graeme Auld, "Climate Wars? A Systematic Review of Empirical Analyses on the Link between Climate Change and Violent Conflict," International Studies Review 19:4 (December 2017): 622–45. Return to reference 33

CONTENDING PERSPECTIVES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

What has made many environmental issues so politically controversial at the international level is that states have tended to divide along the developed/developing—North/South—economic axis (although some developed states have been more accommodating than others). From the perspective of some in the developed world, many environmental issues appear to stem from the population explosion, which they take to be a problem of the developing world, and furthermore, a problem over which governments in those parts of the world have some control (see Chapter 12). In this view, the developing world's governments must enact policies that slow population growth rates, leading to a decrease in the pressure on scarce natural resources and diminishing the negative externality of pollution locally, regionally, and internationally.

Though the majority of carbon emissions have come from countries in the Global North, many in the Global South are the first to feel the effects of global warming. In early 2021, warming temperatures may have caused a portion of the Nanda Devi Glacier to snap off in the state of Uttarakhand, India, causing a devastating flood.

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States of the developing South perceive the environmental issue differently. They correctly point to the fact that many environmental problems—including the overuse of natural resources and the pollution issues of ozone depletion and

greenhouse gas emissions—are the result of the industrial world's excesses. By exploiting the environment in an unsustainable way, by misusing the commons, the developed countries were able to achieve high levels of either economic development or consumption, depending upon one's point of view. Putting restrictions on developing countries by not allowing them to exploit their natural resources or by limiting their use of fossil fuels may impede their development. Thus, because the developed states have been responsible for most of the environmental excesses, it is they who should bear the burden of reduced energy consumption and environmental cleanup.

The challenge in addressing transnational environmental issues is to negotiate a middle ground that reflects the reality that both sides are, in fact, correct. High population growth rates are a problem in the South—one that will not be alleviated until higher levels of economic development are achieved. Overuse of natural resources is primarily a problem of the North. Powerful economic interests in the North are continually reminding us that changes in resource use may lead to a lower standard of living. An offshoot of both problems is pollution, which in the South stems primarily from land-and water-resource overuse due to excessive population, and in the North stems primarily from the by-products and negative externalities of industrialization. Environmental issues often involve trade-offs between economic interests and environmental sustainability.

Realists, liberals, and constructivists do not all have the same degree of concern for environmental issues, although each group has modified its perspectives in response to changing conditions. Realists' principal emphasis has been on state security. Indeed, 70 percent of states have recognized in their published national security strategies that climate change is a "threat multiplier." But they also recognize that a healthy and strong population, near self-sufficiency in food, and a dependable supply of natural resources are essential for ensuring security. Yet realists worry, for example, that making the costs of natural resource protection or pollution abatement too high diminishes a state's competitive position. This can

explain, for example, why the Bush and Trump administrations were against signing on to climate change agreements that did not require developing countries to adopt costly changes.

At the same time, however, degradation of the environment impacts states regardless of their intentions. For example, Iceland, once dependent on cod fishing as an industry, has seen its population become more vulnerable to unsustainable harvesting practices by its own fisheries and those of Britain and the United States, as well as more vulnerable to global warming, which has caused cod populations to move to deeper or more northerly waters. The implication is that for countries like Iceland, sovereignty is necessarily abridged, and the security of Iceland's citizens cannot necessarily be guaranteed by the state. Finally, as shown above in the discussion of nonrenewable resources like oil, realists are likely to view that issue as ripe for conflict since access to petroleum and other strategic minerals has been key for economic development and national power.

Thus, realists fit environmental issues into the theoretical concepts of the state, power, and sovereignty. They remind us that sovereignty is a bedrock principle under the Westphalian system and this is why sovereignty over natural resources and priority given to domestic jurisdiction are so often included in environmental agreements. Since realists point to the weakness of international law and the inadequacy of international organizations, states must rely on themselves to address their own problems. They live in a self-help system. Perhaps Homer-Dixon and Diamond are correct—state survival and the international balance of power are at stake.

Liberals provide useful insights for addressing environmental issues. Given the transnational nature of many environmental problems, the credence liberals give to the notion of an interdependent international system seems accurate, making environmental issues ripe for the international cooperation they argue can come about. The numerous environmental treaties states have signed provides evidence that attempts to cooperate are alive and well. Moreover, because liberal perspectives can accommodate a greater variety of different

actors, including domestic and nongovernmental organizations, liberals see environmental issues as legitimate, if not key, international issues of the twenty-first century. Unlike realists, who fear dependency on other countries because it may diminish state power and therefore limit state action, liberals acknowledge interdependence and have faith in the technological ingenuity of individuals to be able to solve many of the natural resource dilemmas. They, too, are keenly aware of how the environment affects the lives of individuals.

Most important, liberals place more faith in international organizations and the law in helping to address environmental issues and ameliorate conflicts. One study of over 300 treaties between 1950 and 2002 finds that the propensity for conflicts over water resources to escalate depends on whether the river is governed by a formal agreement. International river agreements that call for joint monitoring, that have a mechanism for conflict resolution and treaty enforcement, and that delegate power to an international organization are less likely to escalate into violence.34 These issues can be peacefully resolved usually through diplomatic negotiations.

Constructivists remind us of the salient discourses on environmentalism, sustainability, and sovereignty. How political and scientific elites define the problems and how these definitions change over time as new ideas become rooted in their belief sets are of major interest to constructivists. In the face of the international nature of environmental problems and their solutions, two core concepts are challenged in constructivist literature. One trend has been to examine the shifting norms around sovereignty. Karen T. Litfin refers to the "greening of sovereignty." "Once sovereignty is understood as a socially constructed institution that varies across space and time, with multiple meanings and practices that are not set in stone, then its relationship to environmental questions can be more easily studied." Sovereignty is not either eroded or fortified; it can be both simultaneously. The scope of state autonomy may be narrowed by environmental pressures from above and below, while at the same time the problem-solving capacity of states increases. Or a state's autonomy and authority can be enhanced at home, while at the same time its

autonomy to act in the global commons is constrained.35 There are thus different degrees of sovereignty, and states learn and can become socialized to different degrees of sovereignty as they struggle to deal with environmental issues.

Another trend is to suggest that the term environment is also a contested concept; that the notion that the environment is a space "out there" to be preserved or exploited needs to be replaced by an ecosystem perspective. Rather than a discourse about the threat the environment poses for national security (states) or international security (states together) or human security (people themselves), an ecosystem perspective focuses on the need for states to strive for "ecological security." Such a perspective would create a discourse that some argue would change our understanding of who is threatened by environmental degradation and who needs to be protected. As Matt McDonald argues, an ecological security discourse "orients toward ecosystem resilience and the rights and needs of the most vulnerable across space (populations of developing worlds), time (future generations), and species (other living beings)."36

Check Your Understanding

The developed countries often blame developing countries and their population explosion for environmental problems. What is a common response by developing countries to these accusations? They agree and have pledged to work to improve the environment.

They agree, but refuse to take responsibility for their contribution to environmental problems.

They disagree, arguing that the developed countries have been responsible for most environmental excess.

They disagree and blame the capitalist international system.

Endnotes

Note 34: Jaroslav Tir and Douglas M. Stinnett, "Weathering Climate Change: Can Institutions Mitigate International Water Conflict?" Journal of Peace Research 49:1 (2012): 211–25. Return to reference 34

Note 35: Karen T. Litfin, ed., The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 4. Return to reference 35

Note 36: Matt McDonald, "Climate Change and Security: Towards Ecological Security?" International Theory 10:2 (2018): 153–80. Return to reference 36

IN SUM: FROM THE ENVIRONMENT TO OTHER ISSUES OF HUMAN SECURITY

The environment poses an interesting challenge to policy makers, as the problems we face in this issue area do not respect state borders. International cooperation is necessary, but that cooperation can threaten states' sovereignty and can weaken states in their ability to compete with other states—economically (as seen with climate change, for example, and the economic costs that mitigation would impose on states) as well as politically (as seen in the competition between states over freshwater resources, for example). How do states overcome these issues to work together to deal with environmental degradation? This is a major challenge we face in the world today.

Looking at the environment has also brought into question our understanding of what "security" means. Environmental degradation threatens livelihoods as well as lives. It is thus often thought of as a major issue of human security. We address this concept and other issues related to human security in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

One of the hallmarks of the Westphalian system is national sovereignty over natural resources. How does that principle impact the ability of the international community to address environmental problems?

Global warming, unlike some other environmental issues, is a problem of the global commons. Why are problems of the global commons particularly difficult to solve?

Rivers shared by different countries pose particular economic and environmental issues. What political conflicts have

emerged around the Nile River and the Mekong River?

Select two news accounts that address the trade-off between economic development and environmental sustainability. Can these two objectives be harmonized in the twenty-first century? Why or why not?

Some environmental issues may lead to interstate conflict—some of which are violent conflict—and some may be susceptible to diplomatic negotiations. Which issues are apt to lead to violent conflict and which ones are more likely to be resolved by negotiations?

Key Terms

adaptation (p. 406) epistemic community (p. 398) geoengineering (p. 405) mitigation (p. 402) negative externalities (p. 394) soft law (p. 394)

Glossary

adaptation

shifting resources into preparing for and remediating effects of climate change

epistemic community

community of experts and technical specialists who share a set of beliefs and a way to approach problems

geoengineering

large-scale manipulations of the physical, chemical, or biological systems to reduce the levels of atmospheric gases

mitigation

policies designed to reduce greenhouse emissions

negative externalities

term for costly (harmful) unintended consequences of exchange

soft law

nonbinding norms of state behavior; may or may not eventually become hard or obligatory law

12

Human Security: Population, Migration, and Global Health

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In addition to the COVID-19 crisis that swept through the world, desert locusts descended on the countries of East Africa, putting livestock and various crops at risk. How do compounding crises like climate change, pandemics, and migration affect human security?

In 2020, the lives of people in East Africa were threatened by several converging crises. As COVID-19 began to spread into the region, there was a historic outbreak of desert locusts. Swarms numbering in the tens of millions swept across the continent, devouring agricultural fields and destroying the food supply in an area home to around 20 percent of the world's most food-insecure people. The economic shutdown in developed countries brought about because of COVID-19 has further increased the economic strain on these countries. Compounding these issues, the area has been plagued by severe flooding, which has killed almost 300 people and displaced 500,000. The camps created to shelter these migrants, which have very limited health infrastructures, face an increased risk of the spread of COVID-19. It is the perfect storm of events placing millions of people's security—and lives—at risk.

The issues threatening the people of East Africa stem not from the threat of war (the usual concern when discussing issues of security in international relations) but from issues related to the environment, health, economic development, and migration due to displacement—issues related to human security. As discussed in Chapter 6, national security was traditionally viewed as security of the state, protection of a state's territorial integrity from external threats or attack. But over time, security has come to encompass not only protection of the state but also protection of people from economic and social deprivation, as well as from natural disasters.

In Chapter 11, we discussed one important human security issue—the environment. Here we introduce three additional

representative issues of human security: population, migration, and global health. While the issues themselves are not new, what is new is that these are now global problems—they directly affect the security of people worldwide, and they often demand global responses. How can we think conceptually about such issues? How do these issues intersect with traditional conceptions of sovereignty, security, and economics? How would a realist, a liberal, and a constructivist address these issues?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Explain what makes population, migration, and health transnational issues of human security.

Describe how population decline may have unintended effects in particular states.

Describe the different explanations for the migration crisis.

Explain the obligations of the international community to address the migration crisis, as well as the limitations on its ability to do so.

Explain the approaches used to combat infectious diseases that have been used to try to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Illustrate the medical and political difficulties in addressing noncommunicable diseases.

Examine the global repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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HUMAN SECURITY IN A GLOBALIZED AND TRANSNATIONAL WORLD

Over time, the concept known as human security has developed as a United Nations approach to address "widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of … people." The relevant UN General Assembly resolution went on to say that this definition meant that, among other things, human security included "[t]he right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are

entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential."1 The resolution was groundbreaking, as it marked the first time that states had agreed on a common understanding of what human security meant.

Some scholars, however, argue that the concept of human security lacks precision and is too expansive.2 They suggest that defining every issue as a security issue may conflate issues that are a matter of life and death with issues that have less dire consequences. Yet employing the qualifying term human—and referring to human security—does reinforce the idea that in international relations people matter.

This more expansive view of security collides head on with the domestic authority of states—undermining the principle of state sovereignty. That tension was clear in the discussion of human rights in Chapter 10—a state has the ability to govern its citizens, but that state's execution of its laws may collide with universal human rights standards and with other states' responsibility to protect. Yet we know that human security issues are not always the results of states' actions. Natural disasters and human-made events often undermine human security, and in those cases both states and the international community are called to respond.

The foundation of human security is how population expands and contracts and related changes over time. An expanding population means that states need more resources for basic human security—food, health, and the environment. But an expanding population is necessary for economic growth according to classical liberal economists. If the state cannot adequately respond to health emergencies or environmental change, that may serve as an impetus for migration—the movement of people across state boundaries to secure a better future.

Check Your Understanding

The concept of human security demonstrates people matter in international relations.

excludes certain groups from freedom of fear and want.

does not include the effects of natural disasters.

ignores population growth.

Glossary

human security

a broadened concept of security to include the protection of individuals from systematic violence, environmental degradation, and health disasters

Endnotes

Note 01: United Nations General Assembly 66/290, adopted on September 10, 2012. Return to reference 1

Note 02: Roland Paris, “Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?” International Security 26:2 (2001): 87–102. Return to reference 2

POPULATION DYNAMICS

Population Expansion and Dispersion Across Regions

If, indeed, people matter in international relations and if the characteristics of the population matter as an ingredient of state power, we need be cognizant of global population trends. In fact, concern with global population trends and its relationship to food security was recognized as early as 1789. At that time, Thomas Malthus posited a key relationship. If population grows unchecked, it will increase at a geometric rate (1, 2, 4, 8, …), whereas food resources will increase at an arithmetic rate (1, 2, 3, 4, …). Very quickly, he postulated, population increases will outstrip food production. This scenario is called the Malthusian dilemma. Although Malthus did not think productivity would keep up with population growth rates, he did acknowledge wars, famine, or moral restraint as ways to check excessive population.3 Three centuries later, The Limits to Growth, an independent report issued by the Club of Rome in 1972, systematically investigated trends in population, agricultural production, natural resource use, and industrial production—as well as pollution and the intricate feedback loops that link these trends. Its conclusion was pessimistic: the earth would reach

natural limits to population growth within a relatively short time.4 In short, human security was perilous.

Neither Malthus nor the Club of Rome proved to be correct. Malthus did not foresee the technological changes that would lead to much higher rates of food production, nor did he predict the demographic transition—a situation in which population growth rates would not proceed unchecked. Although improvements in economic development led at first to lower death rates and hence to a greater population increase, over time, as the lives of individuals improved, women became more educated, people moved to urban areas, and birthrates dropped dramatically. The advent of safe, reliable birth-control technologies also led to a decline in birthrates. Likewise, the Club of Rome's predictions proved too pessimistic, as technological change stretched resources beyond the limits predicted in its 1972 report. Although Malthus and the Club of Rome missed some key trends, their prediction that the world's population would increase dramatically has proved correct. The population has increased from 800 million in 1776 to 7.8 billion in 2020. The UN estimates that by 2064 the global population will reach 9.7 billion. Interestingly, that prediction suggests that the rate of growth is gradually falling and by the end of the century the total population will fall to 8.8 billion. In fact, the relative rate of growth of the world's population has declined much faster than expected. But several key observations make population and population growth rates cause for concern.

First, the population increase is not uniformly distributed across geographic regions. Women in Africa average 4.1 births; in Asia and Latin America, 2.0 births; in North America, 1.8 births; and in Europe, 1.6 births. Clearly, a significant demographic divide exists between the rich with low population growth rates and the poorer states, particularly in Africa, with higher population growth rates. These divides have politically sensitive consequences, as poor states labor under the burden of the population explosion while attempting to imitate the economic consumption standards of North America and Europe.

Second, rapid rates of overall population growth mean more younger people to feed, clothe, and keep healthy. That population naturally seeks a higher level of economic development. That means increased demands for natural resources—in particular, arable land and freshwater. For countries that already have large populations, such as China, India, and Bangladesh, the problem is severe. In Bangladesh and Nepal, the growing population is forced onto increasingly marginal land. In Nepal, human settlements at higher elevations have resulted in deforestation, as people cut down trees for fuel, leading to hillside erosion, landslides, and other "natural" disasters. In Bangladesh, population pressures have led to settlements on deltas, which are vulnerable to monsoonal flooding. This strips topsoil, decreases agricultural productivity, and, especially when coupled with rising seawaters, dislocates millions of individuals. That is one of the reasons that many Bangladeshis seek refuge in India.

Accelerating demand for natural resources occurs in the developed world as well. As the smaller (even slightly declining) population becomes more economically affluent, it demands more energy and resources to support higher standards of living—more living space, larger houses, and more highways. Wealthier people, especially those in the United States, also produce more garbage per person than in the developing world, and very little is recycled, leading to a high demand for domestic landfill space and a profitable business in exporting garbage to the developing world.

Attempts to lower high population growth rates lead to numerous ethical dilemmas for state and international policy makers. How can state economic growth rates be sustained without an increasing population? After all, the number of people matters for economic growth. Working-age people contribute to economic growth and greater productivity. It was the unlimited supply of laborers in China which enabled that country's high growth rates from 1980 to 2010. So how can high population growth rates be curbed without leading to a reduction in state growth and without infringing on individuals' rights to procreate? Can policies be developed

that both improve the standards of living for those already born and guarantee improvements for future generations?

Population becomes a classic collective-goods problem. It is eminently rational for a couple in the developing world to have more children: children provide valuable labor and often earn money in the wage economy, contributing to family well-being and serving as the social safety net when no governmental programs exist. But what is economically rational for each couple is not environmentally sustainable for the collectivity. The amount of land in the commons shrinks on a per capita basis, and the overall quality of the resource declines. Over time, the finite resources of the commons have a decreasing capacity to support the population: Adam Smith's famous "invisible hand," when considered in the context of a commons, may therefore lead not to collective benefit but to collective disaster.

What actions can be taken with respect to population to alleviate or mitigate these dilemmas? Using coercion to prohibit procreation is politically untenable and pragmatically difficult, as China discovered with its one-child policy (see below). Relying on group pressure to force individual changes in behavior is also unlikely to work in the populous states.5 Leaving coercion aside, even if individuals may desire smaller families, family-planning methods may be unavailable to them.

The Dilemmas of Population Decline

The connections, causes, and consequences of global population growth and decline have proven not only interlinked but also complex. In many Western states, including Europe and Russia, as well as in Japan, Korea, and China, not only has population growth slowed, but it is also in decline, and the population is aging. By 2050, it is estimated that one quarter of the population in Europe and North America will be over 65 years old. That cohort puts an enormous financial burden on the working population. Twenty-three nations are expected to see their population cut in half by 2100.

This remarkable trend—women having fewer babies and having babies later in life—can be explained by the extraordinary result of access to education and employment outside the home. The aggregation of these individually rational decisions is a declining birthrate. In China, this dramatic decline may have been due not to individual choice but to the government policy of one child per couple instituted in 1978. But in 2015, China rescinded the one-child policy, recognizing the deleterious economic consequences of a declining population. Ironically, Chinese fertility rates were already declining before the one-child policy, and lifting the restriction on the number of children has not had the desired effect. In 2019, the number of babies born dropped by 580,000 to 14.6 million, the lowest since 1949. By the end of 2100, the Chinese population may well fall below 1 billion for the first time since 1980.

Over one-half of the world has a birth rate below replacement (less than 2.1 children per female). In Russia, characterized by one demographer as a "demographic disaster," there has been a steep decline in population due to a combination of two decades of dramatic underinvestment in health care and education, widespread alcoholism, and heart disease. This decline has occurred despite significant immigration into Russia from the Central Asian states.6 This not only slows state economic growth but also weakens state power, as population size is one indicator of that power. Japan and South Korea are both undergoing the same dynamic, albeit for different reasons. Working-age people have emptied out of rural villages, leaving the elderly behind. Even in the Tokyo region, for example, it is estimated that the share of people over 65 years will rise from 21 percent to 38 percent by 2040 while the number of people over 75 years will more than double. That is leading to a severe labor shortage which affects economic growth and productivity.

In China and India, in particular, the problem is also a surplus of males, since males are traditionally preferred for cultural reasons and sex-selective abortions are common. From 2010 to 2015, the sex ratio at birth was 116 boys to 100 girls in China and 111 boys to 100 girls in India, above the 105 to 100

natural worldwide ratio. In the 2020s, China is expected to have 30 million more men than women of the same age, leading to what is called the "marriage squeeze." This imbalance, referred to locally as "bare branches," leads to prostitution and the sale of brides, and, some scholars suggest, actually threatens domestic and international security.7 In these countries, however, there is some evidence that the sex ratio is returning to a more natural ratio, as government policies support girls' education and urban populations are under less pressure to have male heirs.

Some states are adopting policies to reverse the pattern of population decline. For example, the Nordic countries like Norway and Sweden support parental leave and strongly enforce antidiscrimination policies making it possible for women to avoid having to choose between becoming mothers and obtaining higher education and employment. And in Hungary, with an average of 1.5 children per woman, labor shortages are emerging. Rejecting migration to compensate for the shortfall, Prime Minister Viktor Orban has instituted policies to increase the birthrate, building more kindergarten facilities and exempting families from income taxes who have four or more children.

What is clear is that after decades characterized by a fear of a population explosion (or "bomb"), there is now a vigorous debate about changing population dynamics. Analyst Zachary Karabell poses the question: Does the demographic decline mean the end of capitalism as we know it? After all, capitalist economic growth revolved around more people consuming more things. If population plateaus or declines, can there be real growth?8 In the aptly titled book Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline the authors answer that population decline will lead to slower economic growth and increasing inequality, a trend that puts financial and economic systems at risk.9 Other demographers are not so sure—demography may not be destiny. After all, population trends change slowly and statistical methods may not reflect those changes.10

States are not the only actors affected by population pressures. This issue affects individuals, couples, and communities,

along with their deepest-held religious and ethical values. Population pressures also involve the nongovernmental community that seeks to change public attitudes about population and procreation, as well as the Catholic church and fundamentalist Islamic sects that oppose artificial restrictions on family size. And they involve intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank, charged with promoting sustainable development and yet hamstrung by the wishes of some member states to refrain from directly addressing the population issue. Perhaps most important, the population issue intersects inextricably with each human security issue: the environment, security of place, and health. But ironically, while population change may well be the pivotal human security issue, it may also be the one that states and other international actors can do the least about changing.

Contending Perspectives on Population Dynamics

Realists see two threats emerging from these demographic trends that could destabilize the balance of power. First, states with burgeoning populations and insufficient food might seek to expand their territory or acquire food by means of war. Second, surplus males, who might otherwise turn to domestic crime or destabilize the state from within, might be channeled into state militaries and "expended" in aggressive interstate wars. Marxists and dependency theorists see these possibilities as confirming that the Global South needs economic development for more than simply material needs. For liberals, as a state's economic fortunes improve, so does access to health care and family planning. Better education for parents and their children, in turn, opens more economic opportunity, and the cycle reinforces itself. Thus, closing the development gap leads to a self-reinforcing spiral of economic improvement and demographic balance. Failing to close that gap may lead people to find other places where their needs are met.

Check Your Understanding

What is the Malthusian dilemma? Human-driven climate change will lead to smaller future populations.

The economy drives changes in population levels.

Population increase will outstrip food supply.

Fertility rates decline as societies become wealthier.

Glossary

Malthusian dilemma

the scenario in which population growth rates will increase faster than agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages; named after Thomas Malthus

demographic transition

the situation in which increasing levels of economic development lead to falling death rates, followed by falling birth rates

Endnotes

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Note 04: Donella H. Meadows et al., The Limits to Growth (New York: Signet, 1972). Return to reference 4

Note 05: Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” Science 162 (December 13, 1968): 1243–48. Return to reference 5

Note 06: Nicholas Eberstadt, “The Dying Bear: Russia’s Demographic Disaster,” Foreign Affairs 90:6 (March 2011): 95–108. Return to reference 6

Note 07: Andrea den Boer and Valerie M. Hudson, “A Surplus of Men, a Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia’s Largest States,” International Security 26:4 (Spring 2002): 5–38. For extended argument, see Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer, Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia’s Surplus Male Population (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005). Return to reference 7

Note 08: Zachary Karabell, “The Population Bust,” Foreign Affairs 98:5 (September/October 2019): 216–21. Return to reference 8

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MIGRATION

Migration of peoples has occurred over the millennia, with individuals fleeing from war and conflict, seeking a more secure life in another land. For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europeans moved quite freely to North America, Australia, and South America (subject to the national laws of receiving states). There were lands requiring cultivation, factories needing workers, and cities employing new labor. They were moving for economic reasons—to better their lives. Chinese and Japanese peoples joined in the exodus, though their numbers were much smaller.

A Legal Framework Expanded

The two world wars of the twentieth century posed particular problems, with so many people fleeing conflict and experiencing ethnic persecution. At the end of World War II, what many thought to be a temporary problem of dislocation was met by constructing a legal process to address that problem. The international community negotiated the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a legal document that defined refugees, specified the rights of refugees, and provided a process for regularizing the status of refugees permanently. According to the convention, a refugee is a person who, because of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." The international community, namely the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), working with the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs, is responsible for protecting refugees by providing temporary refuge until another state grants them asylum or they can

return home. Refugees are entitled to non-refoulement: that is, they cannot be forced to return to their country of origin. Originally the 1951 convention applied only to Europe, but it was made universal by a 1967 protocol.

Originally the term refugee was applied quite narrowly, just to people facing direct, individual persecution. Over time, the definition has been broadened to include people fleeing civil wars. Regional agreements were the first to expand the definition to include that group. The civil wars of the 1990s, ethnic strife in the new millennium, and the repercussions of the Arab Spring meant that the lives of millions of people have been disrupted and often threatened because of their religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs. Many of these individuals seek either temporary protection or permanent asylum in another country, but many of these people could not generate documented evidence of individual persecution as required under the 1951 convention. International agencies can try to provide legal documentation and meet the refugees' humanitarian needs.

In recent years, another category of so-called refugees has been noted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change —people fleeing their home country because of climate change ("climate migrants"). The estimates of how many people fall in this category vary considerably from 20 million to over 2 billion people. But we do know that more than eight million people from southeast Asia have migrated because of unpredictable monsoon rainfall and drought, that millions in Africa's Sahel region have moved because of drought and resulting crop failures, and that the projected number of migrants leaving Central America and Mexico is anticipated to rise to 1.5 million a year by 2050 due to drought and food insecurity attributed to climate change.11 Precise numbers are difficult to track since climate-induced migration is slow and occurs over long periods of time. But the reasons are the same: changes in temperature and precipitation, making some land unable to support its population; natural or human-made disasters; unprecedented weather events, and rising sea levels which provide an impetus for people to move. Climate change migration may be seen as an example of adaptation, as

discussed in Chapter 11. However, the fact that the countries in the Global North are excluding many of these migrants makes this adaptation approach ineffective.12

In addition to those fleeing civil war and ethnic strife, the world today sees tremendous numbers of economic migrants —people fleeing poverty, unemployment or underemployment, and poor economic prospects. These individuals seek a better life and see greater possibilities in richer countries. These economic and climate migrants likewise represent a human security issue. On the African continent, peoples from Burkina Faso and Niger may make the journey to coastal states like Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire where they see more opportunities. Peoples from Ghana, Senegal, and other states attempt the dangerous journey across the Sahara to Libya, hoping to join the exodus to Europe. In virtually all cases, these individuals want a better life not only for themselves but also for the family they leave behind. If they are successful in their trek, they send home remittances that can provide a lifeline for the impoverished left behind (see Chapter 8). Unlike refugees, these economic migrants do not have a legal right to asylum and, if caught, are often returned to their country of origin. They are not entitled to international legal protection, in what some scholars have labeled a protection gap.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are another group: individuals who have been uprooted from their homes for various reasons but remain in their home country. While they are not legally entitled to international protection, they nevertheless create a humanitarian crisis. They need shelter, food, and medical care, but the state where they are living is either unable or unwilling to provide those necessities, even though they are still technically under that state's protection. Since the mid-1990s, however, the UNHCR has gradually assumed responsibility for assisting many of the IDPs, working with humanitarian agencies like the World Food Programme and UNICEF, and NGOs like the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders.

For all these groups of people—people fleeing unfavorable economic conditions, people fleeing war, individuals fleeing

the effects of climate change, and peoples internally displaced—there is no international legal right to move. States have authority to accept or reject actual refugees or would-be refugees. Only states can grant permanent residency, permission to work, and citizenship.

Increasingly, however, there is a notion of the right to international protection. Both signed in 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration represent international attempts to support an environment more conducive to an equitable and predictable sharing of responsibility for all those fleeing situations of concern. These compacts are voluntary, whereby states pledge to achieve key objectives but are not legally bound to comply. The United States (and Hungary) withdrew from the negotiations, citing sovereignty concerns.

Though the compacts do not bestow legal status to the various types of migrants, they assert that humanitarian assistance—food, medicines, education, and even jobs—should be provided. The hope is that the individuals can eventually be voluntarily repatriated or resettled. This is but one attempt to address the protection gap.

The Migration Crisis in Numbers

At the end of 2019, there were more than 70 million individuals forcibly displaced—100 million over the last decade. That includes 26 million refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced, 4.2 million asylum seekers, and 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad. Two-thirds of all the refugees come from just five countries—Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar, confirming that no continent is immune from migration. Figure 12.1 shows these global trends over two decades.

FIGURE 12.1

Global Displacement (in millions) 2000–2019

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Source: UNHCR, Refugee Data Finder," https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/ (accessed

2/10/21).

Nowhere have the refugee/asylum crisis and humanitarian crisis become so visible as in the civil war in Syria. As of the end of 2019, over 6.6 million persons had fled from Syria, and 6.3 million had been IDPs in Syria itself. The refugees have fled to neighboring countries, with Turkey alone sheltering 3.6 million persons and Jordan 662,000. Each country has handled the situation differently. In some countries, these displaced Syrians are permitted to work and are integrating. In others, Syrians are not allowed to work and are relying on the generosity of relatives and the international community until they can safely repatriate or be resettled in the host country or a third country. In 2020, the plight of internally displaced Syrians from Idlib became critical. As the government bombed the city, one million more people fled toward the Turkish border, but that border closed, trapping the displaced.

The Syrian war explains some of the surge of refugees since 2015 trying to make the journey to Europe through the so-called Balkan land route. Many of these people have been joined by both Afghans and Iraqis, who, likewise, are fleeing conflict and war in their homelands.13 Their hope is to be granted refugee status and perhaps permanent asylum in an EU member state. The response of the EU is discussed below.

In Southeast Asia, a similar crisis has been brought about by the plight of the Rohingya people of Myanmar. The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority, have lived in Myanmar for hundreds of years. During the 1970s, the country's military government increasingly stripped them of their rights, including citizenship. In the early 1990s, extremist Buddhist teaching within Myanmar and repression by the military leadership intensified. Even as Myanmar democratized in 2011, the plight of the Rohingya continued to worsen. At first, Rohingya hired human smugglers and fled on the open sea to Malaysia and Indonesia, states that are not parties to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and lack the national legal frameworks for dealing with refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless people. Then they fled to neighboring Bangladesh, where in just three months in 2017, more than 500,000 people fled—11,000 in just one day. In 2020, some of those people

were relocated to islands in the Bay of Bengal against their will. Despite the efforts of the states in the European Union to push for the creation of a UN Commission of Inquiry, the People's Republic of China has blocked action in the Security Council, prioritizing its economic interests in neighboring Myanmar. After the military coup and violent crackdown in 2021, the situation is not likely to change.

Africa is where more migrants are on the move and where most migrants are hosted. Civil war in Ethiopia between the central government and the northern province of Tigray in 2020–21 led to 200,000 people fleeing the region into Sudan. Earlier, the breakdown of order in Somalia and the Republic of South Sudan put millions of peoples at risk for starvation: approximately 1.1 million from Somalia and 7.5 million in South Sudan. The neighboring states in the region host many of those fleeing the deteriorating conditions: Uganda hosts 1 million South Sudanese; and Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic host another 1 million South Sudanese. When the Darfur region of Sudan was experiencing conflict, millions either were internally displaced or fled to neighboring Chad.

Overwhelmed with the numbers of people on the move and in need of basic necessities, the international community took a traditional approach in providing "temporary" camps for the displaced, an approach widely used to address the Palestinian refugee crisis in the 1950s. Since then, Syrians, Rohingya, Congolese, Rwandans, Somalians, and South Sudanese have all found themselves in camps where international aid agencies provide basic necessities. An example is Dadaab, a massive refugee camp in northern Kenya run by the UNHCR and NGOs. Established in 1992, the camp at one point housed three generations of people fleeing conflict and hardship. Ben Rawlence, in City of Thorns, recounts the human story of this camp, where people's lives are on hold until they can either return to their homeland or be resettled in a third country.14 But the camps are often inadequately equipped and poorly funded—they're crowded, making social distancing impossible, washing facilities are limited, and health resources are very basic, making the people in these camps susceptible

to COVID-19 and other epidemics. As one aid worker reminds us, “Regardless of our financial status, our borders, our caste, color or gender, we are all in the same boat fighting the coronavirus.”15 In 2021, Kenya and the UNHCR announced two of the largest camps would close, but the plans for the resettlement of the more than 435,000 individuals remain unclear.

State and Regional Approaches to the Migration Crisis

Refugees, IDPs, and economic migrants all strain the humanitarian system of the IGOs and NGOs that attempt to provide for their basic needs in states that do not have the economic means or administrative capacity to address the problem themselves. Many states are taking their own initiatives to prevent the movement of peoples across their borders (as Hungary has done), tightening the monitoring of borders to prevent the undocumented from entering (as Australia has done in its sea-lanes), and strengthening border defenses. Former U.S. president Donald Trump promised to build a wall between the United States and Mexico to stop the flow of economic migrants from Mexico and Central America and to prevent the flow of illicit commerce of drugs and weapons—a realist solution put forth in the name of national security and national sovereignty.

The European Union’s failure to take a regional approach to accepting refugees has led to a major crisis. The Amsterdam Treaty signed in 1997 granted all border-management issues, including illegal immigration and asylum, to be managed by the EU itself. Since that time, there have been ongoing discussions about the specifics of that Common European Asylum System. The Dublin III Regulation passed in 2013 was seen as one part of that system. That regulation specifies that the country in which the asylum seeker or migrant first applies for refuge is the one responsible for either accepting or rejecting claims; the seeker may not restart the process in another jurisdiction. But that meant when the 1.3 million asylum seekers and migrants arrived in 2015, both Italy and Greece were swamped as the first ports of entry. Hungary withdrew from the arrangement that same year, fencing the borders and turning migrants away. The EU responded by

providing more funding for rescuing refugees at sea and aiding refugee-swamped Italy and Greece. Germany and Sweden agreed to accept many asylum seekers, causing a political backlash in those states.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVESHuman Security: A View from Africa's Sahel Region

The African Sahel is a region of climate transition between the arid Sahara Desert to the north and the humid savanna to the south. It spans the width of the continent covering ten countries from Senegal and Mauritania in the west to Sudan and Eritrea in the east. Historically characterized by livelihoods based on subsistence agriculture and nomadic livestock grazing, it is the only region in the world where UN indicators of human development are getting worse. In the center of this region are three states—Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—which are considered to be the epicenter of a major humanitarian crisis. For the populations of these countries, human security is at stake.

Among the world's poorest, the people of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have an average life expectancy of 60 years old, their mean years of schooling are two, and their gross national income per capita is $1,300. On top of poverty, they face rapid population growth, food insecurity, climate change, and the uncertainty of the pandemic. These problems are exacerbated by increasing conflict and violent extremism combined with weak governments lacking the capacity to provide security and services to the people. In this perfect storm, these countries have seen a twentyfold increase in displaced people between 2018 and 2020—from 70,000 to 1.5 million.

None of this is new for the region. Throughout history, its geography has led to periods of prolonged drought followed by normal rainfall patterns and occasionally exceptional floods. In the 1970s, the Sahel captured international attention when a major drought and subsequent famine killed nearly 200,000 people. Since then, food crises have developed regularly. Compared with the average over the previous five years, in 2020, food insecurity increased by 514 percent in

Burkina Faso, 130 percent in Mali, and 144 percent in Niger. An estimated 7.4 million people were food insecure in 2020's "lean season"—referring to a time when rainfall is at its low point.

The problem of food insecurity has been exacerbated by climate change. The increasing temperatures caused by climate change are making the lean season last longer and the temperatures hotter. Droughts and floods are growing longer and more frequent, further undermining food production. Desertification caused by over-farming and grazing, natural erosion, and climate change are causing the Sahel to slowly become more and more like the Sahara, with yields expected to fall by 20 percent per decade by the end of the century.

Exploding population growth compounds the human security problem. Population pressures caused by high birthrates—around six children per woman—and lower childhood mortality mean there is more competition for using the Sahel's fragile, increasingly degraded land. Farmers are being pushed northward to cultivate more crops to satisfy the surging population, which is taking away land from the herders. Periodic violence is erupting more and more from localized grievances between ethnic groups over use of the land and its resources.

Basic government services are also becoming strained by the growing population. Current education and health-care infrastructures will be unable to meet the demand of the rapidly increasing youth population. It is also unlikely that the economy will be able to create enough jobs for the upcoming generations for sustained economic growth.

Government health services in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are also straining under the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health systems in all three countries were already fragile, and the pandemic has pushed them to the breaking point. And displaced populations crowded in camps have increased the spread of the disease. Of particular concern, however, is that other health services for malaria, polio vaccination, HIV, and mother and child health are being neglected.

On top of these crises, Islamic jihadists have begun to make their way into the region from Libya and the Middle East. They are seizing land, attacking schools and health facilities, and kidnapping, extorting, and killing the local population. State security forces have proven unable to protect their citizens.

In an attempt to address this perfect storm of crises, the UN held a virtual ministerial meeting in October 2020 to raise money to provide aid to the Sahel countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. More than 20 donors pledged almost $1 billion to the three countries. But is it enough? As one victim of extremist violence said, “We need help. We need support. We need security.”a

Internally displaced people fleeing violence stand in line for food at a camp in Burkina Faso while others prepare to cook.

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FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The environment of the Sahel has always made life for its inhabitants precarious. Explain.

What other human security issues would you imagine the people in the Sahel are facing?

Why do you think the international donor community is seemingly reluctant to send more aid to the region?

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Attempts to develop a quota system in which EU member states were obliged to accept a specific number of migrants have been met with vehement opposition. In 2018, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia refused to accept refugees or abide by quotas. The EU then resorted to paying Turkey to prevent migrants from traveling to the mainland of an EU country. Hence, thousands have fled to Lesbos, a Greek Island, where they languish in camps. The EU also pays Libya to prevent people from crossing across the Mediterranean Sea to the EU. But these arrangements are not permanent. In February 2020, Turkey reneged on its agreement with the EU. And Libya, mired in its own civil war, has not provided safe

haven. Reports of criminal smuggling and sexual abuse of detainees are rampant. The European-wide system is gridlocked.

The complexity of the issues connected to the massive number of migrants suggests that traditional approaches to the human rights of migrants need to be rethought. Two prominent scholars have suggested a radical alternative: reintegrate displaced peoples into society, providing them with jobs and opportunities instead of allowing them to languish in camps, with a semipermanent state of dependency on the international community.16 To address the economic migrant problem, the solution must clearly be long term—economic growth and development must occur in poor countries, as discussed in Chapter 8. But in the short term, the issue needs to be managed.

Yet some individuals and states benefit economically from the migration crisis. Human traffickers make an estimated $35 billion a year from the migrant crisis, according to the International Organization for Migration. Human smuggling is the third-largest business for international criminals after gun and drug trafficking. Companies also hire undocumented workers for low wages, thus increasing their profits. Finally, the remittances sent home by migrants continue to be the lifeblood of the families in the countries these migrants are fleeing.

Contending Perspectives on Migration

These massive and unexpected migration flows pose a key test for realism. Under realism, states are sovereign in their internal domain, so they have the right to admit people into their state or to deny them entrance. And they also have the obligation to support the state against external threats. When the numbers of migrants are large, or when those persons might threaten the economic security of the state by taking away jobs, or when persons who may do harm to the state might be among them, then states have the obligation to take action to halt resettlement, even if they have previously ratified an international legal document. Indeed, this may

mean revisiting the viability of the 1951 Convention on Refugees.

For liberals, the migration crisis revisits the role of domestic politics. One of the branches of the liberal perspective focuses on domestic preference formation. Groups within a country may get the government's attention and thus be able to influence state preferences. The election of President Trump whose central campaign promise was to "build the wall" shows the key role of domestic politics in determining policy. But that preference conflicts with those of others, namely groups who support more open immigration policies either as a stimulus for economic growth or as a reflection of values supporting individual freedom and liberty.

A liberal perspective would also recognize the key domestic constraints of the least developed states, where 86 percent of the world's refugees reside. Those states do not have the financial means to support the new arrivals. This sets up domestic conflict between the nationals and the migrants and refugees, as seen in both the Middle East and African states. Since the international community has not provided sufficient resources for food or emergency medical care in resettlement camps, tensions are exacerbated between nationals and the migrants as they each contend for scarce resources. This is one reason for the backlash against unrestricted migration policies.

Constructivists would focus on the important role that identities play in our understanding of migration and the refugee crisis. As constructivists argue, states and their identities are socially constructed. There is not a Kenyan identity without a socially constructed understanding of a Kenyan state with particular borders that have been (often arbitrarily) drawn. A mutual recognition of these borders therefore leads to the creation of state identities: those that come from within the borders are "us" and those from outside are not. Because of the identity that has been constructed around the idea of the state, migrants and refugees are seen as the "other." By definition, they cross the borders that separate states (and their identities) as we recognize them in the international system today. They go from one state with a particular identity into another. A "crisis" then exists, for

example, as refugees flee the conflict in Syria and enter European states, because a significant number of “others” are entering into a state. These “others” are different and must be treated differently. A large contingent of “others” that might be allowed to reside within a receiving state can threaten not only its national identity but also its national security.

For other constructivists, migration and refugees may be considered a key test of the strongly supported R2P (responsibility to protect) norm. The R2P norm not only obligates states to take coercive action against states that strip their own population of basic rights, but also obligates other states to protect such people by providing asylum and refuge. As Alex Bellamy notes, “The granting of safe passage and asylum is without doubt one of the most effective, if not the most effective, ways of directly protecting people from atrocity crimes.”17 But individuals cannot be protected from all contingencies—and the 2020 global pandemic illustrates that reality.

Check Your Understanding

What international organization is the primary group responsible for protecting those people who are forced to leave their country of nationality for fear of persecution? United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

International Committee of the Red Cross

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Amnesty International

Glossary

refugees

individuals who flee from their country of nationality because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group

non-refoulement

principle that refugees cannot be forced to return to their country of origin because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group

internally displaced people (IDPs)

individuals who are uprooted from their homes, often due to civil strife, but remain in their home country

Endnotes

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HEALTH—PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS IN THE GLOBAL COMMONS

Public health and communicable disease are issues that have threatened human security across all types of geographic borders throughout human history. Around 1330, for example, the bubonic plague began in China, transmitted from rodents and fleas to humans. Moving rapidly from China to Western Asia and then to Europe, by 1352 the plague had killed about 25 million people in Europe—one-third of Europe’s population. The epidemic, like others before and after, followed trade routes. During the age of discovery, Europeans carried smallpox, measles, and yellow fever to the distant shores of the Americas, decimating the indigenous populations. Expanding trade and travel in the nineteenth century within Europe and between Europe and Africa accelerated the spread of deadly diseases such as cholera and malaria, leading to the first International Sanitary Conference in 1851.

Between 1851 and 1903, a series of 11 International Sanitary Conferences developed procedures to prevent the spread of contagious and infectious diseases. As economic conditions improved and medical facilities expanded, the prevalence of

diseases such as cholera, plague, yellow fever, and, much later, polio declined in the developed world.

The World Health Organization and Other Global Health Institutions

The idea of ad hoc conferences to discuss global health issues led to the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948, one of the specialized UN agencies. It was established to continue the fight to contain communicable diseases and develop eradication programs for certain diseases. Under that mandate, WHO tackled two of the most deadly diseases with its 1955 malaria eradication program and its 1965 smallpox campaign. While malaria remains a major threat in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and some parts of Africa, the incidence of malaria has finally slowed due to antimalarial drugs, increasing use of mosquito nets, and indoor spraying of insecticides. Since 2000, malaria cases have been reduced by 40 percent and deaths by more than 60 percent worldwide. The smallpox campaign was an even more immediate success. When the vaccination campaign began, there were an estimated 10 to 15 million smallpox cases a year, including 2 million deaths and 10 million disfigurements in the developing world. The last reported case of smallpox occurred in 1977.

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed many vaccination programs preventing diseases like polio, which has led experts to be concerned about resurgences of disease. Here, a woman has her child vaccinated for polio in Pakistan.

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Buoyed by the success of smallpox eradication, WHO tackled polio, cholera, and measles with vaccination programs. By working with state officials, WHO has immunized most of the world's population using an effective and inexpensive polio vaccine, leading to a 99 percent reduction in cases. The administration of vaccines led to a 60 percent drop in cholera in 2018. But despite an effective measles vaccine, there has been a resurgence of outbreaks since 2018 not only in Angola, Chad, Philippines, and Sudan but also in the United States. Among the reasons cited are gaps in coverage, lack of access to health care facilities, and general distrust of vaccines.

Occasionally a contagious disease that had once been contained resurfaces amid war and turmoil. While polio was eradicated in Africa, cases of polio periodically occur in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria. In 2017, because of the war-torn country's crumbling health infrastructure, there were over 1 million cholera cases in Yemen, with 1,600 deaths in a six-week period. And health officials warn that the COVID-19 pandemic could erase the almost two decades of progress against many of these communicable diseases as routine vaccinations are delayed and state health systems overwhelmed by the need to vaccinate against, and treat patients with, COVID-19.

One of the key WHO provisions under its mandate to address communicable diseases is the International Health Regulations (IHR). While originally requiring states to report outbreaks of communicable diseases, these regulations did not legally bind states to do so and only governments received reports. After a spate of new communicable diseases such as Ebola, West Nile virus, HIV/AIDS, and others, the IHR were revised in 2007 to obligate states to report new outbreaks within 24 hours and to permit WHO to use the Internet to publicize threats even if states object. But as discussed below, that system has not always worked effectively.

WHO also has other responsibilities, like providing technical assistance to developing countries, supporting state health infrastructure, approving quality standards for drugs, and facilitating the shipment of those drugs to affected countries. For example, in 2019, WHO approved generic versions of insulin to treat diabetes in hopes of driving down skyrocketing prices. Thus, UN agencies will be able to buy and provide to state officials approved generic versions to treat patients.

More recently, WHO has taken on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) recognized as a significant health threat. NCDs, the so-called lifestyle-related issues, include smoking, obesity, cancer, and diabetes. Such issues are controversial and until recently have been considered wealthy country issues. However, these diseases account for up to 70 percent of all deaths worldwide and WHO projects that by 2030, NCDs will become the leading cause of death in Africa.18

Many NCDs have affordable treatments, capable of improving the quality of life, like insulin and inhalers. Some NCDs require action from the public health community, such as the campaigns against tobacco and obesity. Yet these issues have often not captured the imagination of the donor community. Often international efforts target a specific disease, as illustrated above. Yet many public health officials have criticized the practice of targeting specific diseases. By elevating certain diseases to exceptional status and deeming them worthy of targeted funding, officials may be neglecting incremental improvements in public health systems more generally.

WHO is not the only international organization addressing health-related issues. Others include the World Bank (which, in financial terms, is the biggest contributor to health initiatives); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund); and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The latter two, Gavi and the Global Fund, are newer organizations with more limited missions, created to target specific programs.19

No organization has been more influential in global health than the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Since its establishment in 2000, it has devoted its considerable resources to global health initiatives, including combating HIV/AIDS, supporting prevention research, and helping to finance the vaccines against COVID-19 through Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and individual companies. Major research institutes, such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, and France's Pasteur Institute, are also important contributors to the global health communities. These groups of experts and technical specialists from international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and state and substate agencies form an epistemic community that shares expertise and practices, working together to solve various health problems.20 They are all involved in responding to the broad health-related goal of the Sustainable Development Goals: to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

HIV/AIDS—the Slow Epidemic

Of all communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS is the most illustrative of the challenges and the relative success in overcoming scientific and political obstacles. Originally transmitted from animals to humans in central Africa, it then spread from person to person through the exchange of bodily fluids. Those infected carried it to others around the globe as they travelled among states, all long before any symptoms appeared. But the spread around the world was relatively slow and only recognized as later samples were examined.21

While scientists estimate that HIV was circulating in the Belgian Congo by the 1920s, the first known case of HIV was in a male who died in Congo in 1959. That same year a Haitian shipping clerk died in New York City from a similar ailment. Not until June 5, 1981, was a cluster of cases noted, when five patients were treated for an unusual pneumonia. By the end of 1981, 337 people were known to have HIV. In the next year, 1982, the term AIDS was identified and in September 1983, scientists found that AIDS was not transmitted through casual contact, food, water, air, or environmental surfaces but could be passed through bodily fluids. And each year, cases were identified in more countries. By 1985, one million Americans had been infected. By 1987, WHO estimated that between 5 to 10 million people could be infected with HIV worldwide. From that first case in 1959, it took 25 years for the scale of the problem to be recognized. In 2019, it was estimated that 36.2 million people were living with the disease. Africa is the epicenter with 25.7 million living with the disease and accounts for the overwhelming number of new infections annually.

HIV/AIDS is both an economic and a social issue. As an economic issue, it disproportionately affects those in their primary productive years, between the ages of 15 and 45. As teachers, workers, military personnel, and civil servants are infected, HIV/AIDS threatens economic development and the viability of the military as an institution. As a social issue, HIV/AIDS tears families apart, with children orphaned and left to fend for themselves. As the International Crisis Group explains, HIV/AIDS “destroys the very fibre of what constitutes a nation: individuals, families and communities;

economic and political institutions; military and police forces. It is likely then to have broader security consequences."22 This is why the UN Security Council identified HIV/AIDS as a threat to global security in 2000.

While many different actors have responded to the HIV/AIDS problem, actions by individual states are key. Some states like Uganda, Botswana, and Brazil seized on the issue very rapidly. Other states like South Africa and China were slow to acknowledge the problem. But states have now all responded to the crisis in some way, although some are constrained by financial resources, technical expertise, or social conventions.

Intergovernmental organizations took the leadership role at the early stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, though that response was slow and disorganized. Dissatisfaction with UN leadership led to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, an independent institution that uses local expertise and local ownership of issues to advance its cause involving both public and private sectors. The Global Fund continues to support and deliver antiretroviral drugs as well as help in the fight against tuberculosis and malaria.

Nothing was more critical to reducing the mortality rate of HIV/AIDS than the development of antiretroviral therapy (ART), the drugs used to extend the lives of those infected. Multinational pharmaceutical companies made drugs available in the developed countries in the mid-1990s; however, the cost of the drugs—between $10,000 and $15,000 per person annually—made them essentially unaffordable in the developing world. But beginning in 1998, Brazilian and Indian drug companies began manufacturing generic versions under special licensing, reducing the cost of the treatment to less than $500 per person annually. This activity was controversial because the World Trade Organization's intellectual-property protection rules prohibit internationally traded generic drugs that violate patent restrictions. A compromise to lower prices for the developing world was reached. As a result, by 2019, about 65 percent of those infected in Africa receive antiretroviral treatment and about 67 percent of those infected globally receive ART. The number of AIDS-related deaths dropped from about 1 million annually in 2005 to 690,000 in

2019. Forty years after HIV/AIDS emerged as a global threat, the threat has been mitigated by the use of ARTs and changes in social and medical practices. But for other communicable diseases, time is of the essence.

SARS and Ebola—Lessons Learned and Forgotten

The SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak of 2002–2003 illustrated the urgency of reporting outbreaks of transmissible diseases quickly and honestly. China initially suppressed information, was slow to permit WHO officials to visit affected areas, and failed to take preventive measures for several months. While fewer than 1,000 individuals died, the potential for a global pandemic was widely recognized and the economic repercussions on the most affected states, including China, Vietnam, Singapore, and Canada were significant. After the avian flu broke out in 2005–2006, WHO regulations were revised as described above. The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network was in place for the H1N1 virus in 2009 and Zika in 2016.

The outbreak of Ebola in the West African states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in 2014 tested the new system of quick response and alerts, and in this case the system failed. Ebola was not new; there had been known outbreaks in 1976 and 1995, both in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). But those outbreaks occurred in rural areas, and due to its high mortality rate, the disease died out relatively quickly. In 2014, the outbreak was not contained. Although the UN Security Council called the Ebola outbreak a threat to international peace and security and established an emergency relief effort, and the United States sent troops to help, the belated action failed. In the words of global health specialist Laurie Garrett:

There was still no vaccine, no treatment, no field diagnostic tools, limited supplies of protective gear, nearly nonexistent local health-care systems and trained medical personnel, no clear lines of national and global authority for epidemic response, few qualified scientists capable of and interested in being deployed, no international law governing actions inside

countries lacking the capacity to stop epidemics on their own, and no money.23

With death rates of 80 to 90 percent, people dying in the streets, and hospitals overcrowded, food supplies declined and economic activity ground to a halt. With inadequate domestic health systems unable to contain the outbreak, Doctors Without Borders and a few other NGOs found themselves the primary international groups organizing assistance on the ground. Neither WHO nor the states were in charge. In fact, WHO did not issue its Public Health Emergency of International Concern until over four months after the outbreak. The poor international response can be explained by reductions in budgets dedicated to outbreak-and crisis-response programs—which had been cut 20 percent in a two-year period—and poor administrative practices at the regional level. Over 11,300 people died and the economies of the affected states were damaged. Periodic outbreaks still occur, as in 2018 in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, an area embroiled in conflict, where an estimated 2,280 people perished, and in 2021 in Guinea where nine died, spread by a person infected five years before. A vaccine is now available.

HIV/AIDS, SARS, and Ebola have had and continue to have economic repercussions. In states struggling to achieve economic development, providing ARTs for their HIV-infected population adds to the national debt. Botswana and South Africa face a liability of over 20 percent of their gross domestic product to pay for this future burden; poorer states face a liability in excess of 70 percent of GDP. In 2016, the World Bank estimated that Ebola reduced the gross domestic product in the three countries most affected by an average of $125 per capita. Although a decline in exports of natural resources in those countries at the same time contributed to the drop in GDP, the Ebola epidemic also clearly played a key role. In short, as several economists point out, health issues may evolve from a concern of “ministers of health to one that also directly affects ministers of finance” and “becomes a liability of the donor community,” since the need for funding “will stretch for decades into the future.”24 The fact that during the 1980s the World Bank became the largest

multilateral financier of health programs in developing countries confirms the health-development connection.

Experts had been warning that as people changed the way they interacted with the environment—infringing on physical and animal habitats where viruses live—the next major health crisis was just a matter of time. But the lessons learned by the few and warnings given by many experts proved inadequate for most of the world in 2019 and 2020 as COVID-19 emerged.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The first documented case of an individual hospitalized for a novel virus in Wuhan, China, was on December 16, 2019. Two weeks later, WHO's office in China picked up media reports of a "viral pneumonia" and a "pneumonia of unknown cause." On January 3, 2020, the Chinese government confirmed 27 cases. During the next week, the genetic sequence of the new virus was released by China and China officially notified the United States. WHO waited for more information from China, which was still suggesting that there was no evidence of person-to-person transmission, even as a new case was reported on January 8 in South Korea and shortly thereafter in Thailand, the United States, and Japan. As cases spread across China and abroad, China finally confirmed human-to-human transmission on January 22. By the end of the month, the virus had reached Malaysia, Canada, Brazil, and Tibet. On January 30, WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, the highest-level warning with the recommendation against travel or trade restrictions. Nine days later, China reported 40,213 cases and 811 deaths. At the end of February, China's cases had almost doubled to 79,251 and deaths to 2,835, and the global spread moved rapidly.25 Both the chronology of the early days of the pandemic and the number of cases China reported at the time is disputed. However, the argument that the pandemic spread with uncommon speed is undisputed. By the end of 2020, 70 million cases had been diagnosed worldwide and 1.6 million had died. As Figure 12.2 shows, the pandemic reached all corners of the world. How can we explain why the world was so ill-prepared to address the pandemic? What went wrong, and whose fault was it?

As COVID-19 spread rapidly through Wuhan, the Chinese government sponsored the construction of many emergency hospitals to treat the rush of incoming patients suffering from the virus. Construction of this 1000-bed hospital began on January 23, 2020, and it opened on February 5, 2020.

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Many blame the Chinese government's initial response. The Chinese government suppressed information, fearing public panic, grave economic repercussions, and loss of reputation—all of which did occur after information about the virus was released. Like before, China failed in its obligation to report and warn the world of a deadly virus. Only after almost a year had passed did China allow international public health experts entry into the country to investigate the origins of the virus. Whether the disease emerged from animals in a local market, from a Chinese laboratory, or from some combination is in dispute.

Or was it the fault of WHO, which failed to provide timely warnings and even suppressed its own medical personnel who were privately and on social media expressing grave concern? Why did WHO not recommend more containment measures at the outset? Why did WHO wait until March 11, 2020, before labeling it a global pandemic—almost three months after the first case? Could WHO have pressured the Chinese more forcefully and taken initiatives of its own?

The United States and over 100 other countries have questioned the actions of WHO whose own experts disagreed about the necessary measures to take. States have called for an investigation into how authority is dispersed to the regional level and how the budget is allocated.26 That budget of $4.8 billion over two years, divided among numerous initiatives, had been relatively stagnant over the last 15 years. More than 80 percent of that budget comes from voluntary contributions earmarked for specific purposes. Reform of structure and budget will be on the future agenda.

FIGURE 12.2

Spread of COVID-19 Around the World

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Source: Stephanie Adeline, “How COVID-19 Has Shifted Over Time,” NPR, May 24, 2021, www.npr.org/822491838 (accessed 5/24/21).

Political scientists provide explanations for the problems within WHO.27 IGOs like WHO are an easy target for criticism since these organizations have to satisfy diverse stakeholders including organizational bureaucrats, members of the public health community, and member states each with differing priorities. Yet the organization depends on these same member states for funding and does not have the delegated authority to override interests of major powers. When experts disagree among themselves, as some of WHO’s public health experts have, then states and the public become confused and unable to chart a clear path ahead. And when the epistemic community that is organized around WHO includes only public health experts, other voices, like those prioritizing economic concerns, are often not included in policy discussions.

The states, likewise, share responsibility for failure to act more rapidly for many of the same reasons. States want to control the flow of information; China’s reluctance to share information is not unusual. Even after the outbreak, some states failed to report numbers, making it more difficult to trace the spread. Transportation was not immediately shut down, partially based on the advice of some members of the public health epistemic community. Most states were not prepared, reluctant to admit that there was a crisis which required speedy responses, unable to build up infrastructure to respond due to a broken international supply chain, and unwilling to shut down their economies but for a brief period of time.

The United States proved particularly ill-equipped itself to deal with the emergence of the pandemic. Blame was placed on China and WHO, and in May, the Trump administration announced that the United States would withdraw from WHO after years of providing essential financial resources as well as scientists who worked collaboratively with the institution.

While the decision was reversed in 2021 when the Biden administration took over, the threat was one that rattled many—especially WHO itself. But domestic issues—namely political party polarization and inconsistent community messaging—as well as societal pandemic fatigue go a long way in explaining that state's failure. As Shivshankar Menon asserts, "… the pandemic has diminished every major power's economy, reputation, and influence. No one has been unscathed."28 The United States is no exception, leading some to question future U.S. hegemony and leadership.

Some states did respond rapidly and with considerable effectiveness. States like South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam as well as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—despite being geographically proximate to China and hosting large numbers of Chinese visitors—were quick to shut borders, develop testing and contact tracing capabilities, and use stockpiles of personal protection equipment for health-care workers and other vulnerable populations. These states had developed these procedures from their prior experience of SARS. The public trusted the respective government's actions, so the population followed the mandates handed down. With strong health infrastructure and attention to the science, those states, unlike many others, were ready to respond when that next pandemic occurred. Even some African states like Senegal and Nigeria with experience in dealing with Ebola had protocols and procedures in place when COVID-19 emerged and were able to respond more effectively than anticipated.

The rapid development of effective vaccines to address the pandemic represents a success story for a variety of actors. With the help of Chinese scientists, WHO rapidly released the genetic sequencing of the virus; the American and European scientific community collaborated with WHO in developing viable vaccines in record time; and governments like the United States, along with WHO, subsidized several pharmaceutical companies to manufacture vaccines even before their efficacy was proven in order to hit the ground running once their effectiveness was substantiated. An international effort, organized by WHO, the European Commission, the private sector, scientists, and members of

civil society led to COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access). Coordinated by Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance) and WHO, the COVAX effort is designed to provide equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostics and treatments to the 92 middle-and lower-income countries WHO predicts may not be able to afford the vaccines.

While the goal of COVAX is to fund vaccination for up to 20 percent of each state's population, most states in the Global South have received little vaccine supply. There have been some successful rollouts, but other states and regions have struggled.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have grave economic repercussions that have just begun to be calculated, as discussed in Chapter 8. The Economist estimated that the world economy would shrink by 4.3 percent in 2020 alone, a decline matched only during the world depression of the 1930s and the two world wars. And the costs may be spread over years: the pandemic could amount to $10 trillion in forgone GDP from the 2020 base.29 The World Bank is labeling it a "lost decade" because of the lower trade and investment coupled with disruptions in education that will negatively affect labor productivity into the future.30

In addition to the anticipated economic losses from the pandemic, there are trends that have been intensified that lead both academics and pundits to hypothesize that the pandemic represents a turning point or a pivotal moment in international politics. Stephen Walt, for one, posits that the world will be less open, more protectionist, and characterized by increasing levels of poverty.31 Economic inequality among individuals and among states and regions will be exacerbated as some individuals and some sectors have benefitted from the pandemic while most have suffered significant economic losses—often from lost employment. Regional differences have also become attenuated as the East Asian states were initially able to suppress COVID-19 more effectively and thus were able to restart their economies more rapidly than most other states. China, in particular, has retained its status as a premier exporter of goods. But other regions and countries like India experienced devastating waves of COVID-19 in 2021

with record infections and deaths. Latin America, with record infections in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, was another epicenter. South Asia's and Latin America's economic outlooks suggest increasing levels of poverty and a slow recovery.

But Walt and others note that while COVID-19 is a key moment, not everything in international relations has changed. The basis of the international system is still the territorial state, nationalism is still as strong as ever, and hegemonic rivalry between the United States and China continues, just as realists would predict. Yet transnational threats like future pandemics and climate change will persist. Nonstate actors still have a role to play as liberals predict, and sovereignty continues to be a contested notion just as the constructivists affirm.

Contending Perspectives on Health

Health is an example of a quintessential functionalist issue (see Chapter 9). Virtually everyone agrees that prevention of disease is critical and good health is desired by all. This consensus extends to the widely-shared belief that we should rely on technical experts and highly trained medical personnel to prevent the spread of infectious disease. Given these two functionalist criteria, it is not surprising that one of the first historical areas of international cooperation was health. And interstate cooperation to manage communicable disease has dramatically expanded since that time. But the COVID-19 experience suggests that functionalist logic does not always dominate states' actions. To a degree not seen in hundreds of years, it illustrated the inextricable trade-offs between heath concerns and economic realities which governments had to weigh. How long can economies shut down without unacceptable unintended side effects? What group or groups of people were most affected? Answering that question brings in not only health experts but also economists and policy makers with different priorities.

Differences among the various perspectives remain. Because most realists focus on states and define security narrowly (as physical security), realists tend to reduce a broad array of global health issues to such goals as responding to outbreaks

of communicable disease or preparing against the possibility of the deliberate use of bioweapons by state or nonstate actors. Once health issues are conceptualized around the notion of threats, relevant questions tend to get reduced to the capacity of the state to defend itself against those threats. The result is a paradox in two respects. First, because it privileges states as independent political actors, threat rhetoric tends to attract considerable organizational and financial resources at the domestic level. Yet the likelihood that any one state alone, however powerful, can succeed in mitigating the "threat" is low. Not all transnational issues demand a multilateral response, but some health issues do require worldwide responses. Second, the privileging of short-term, direct security threats like terrorism over longer-term indirect threats like a compromised global health-care infrastructure can lead to seemingly irrational policies. Jeopardizing the polio immunization program in Pakistan by using it to locate Osama bin Laden would only make sense if Al Qaeda had killed and maimed more human beings worldwide than polio had, but in fact the reverse is true.

For liberals, domestic health issues are key concerns, with many different domestic actors taking strong positions. Given that disease does not respect national borders, cooperating internationally is a necessity and results in a win-win proposition for all. Failing to take necessary steps to report the spread of epidemics or take preventive action will affect all, though not all groups equally. As a member of the community of states, liberals focus attention on not only states but also international institutions and both public and private local and substate actors.

Constructivists focus our attention on what we think world health means, and how that meaning came to be established. For example, as noted earlier, the resources a state may be able to extract from its citizens to engage health as an issue may depend on whether, in a given state, threat rhetoric is a more successful framing than cooperation and prevention rhetoric. For some feminist international relations theorists, the argument might be that women and men understand the world differently: women may think of world health in terms of

long-term prevention and health-care infrastructure, and men may think of world health in terms of short-term responses to acute threats. The fact that most epistemic communities and state bureaucracies are staffed by males means that world health issues are too often addressed as reactions to periodic health crises. More women in positions of authority, or a more humanistic (as opposed to masculinist) perspective, feminist theories argue, might therefore be needed before health outcomes improve for individuals.

Which of these perspectives help us explain states' response to COVID-19? Perhaps realism comes the closest to explaining states' responses, as each country reverted to trying to protect its own national interest. States competed against one another for personal protective equipment, respirators, medications, and vaccines that would be available to their own population; pundits labelled this vaccine nationalism. States blamed one another for respective failures—the Chinese failure to warn; WHO's failure to sound the alarm in a rapid fashion; the failure of Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, and India to contain the spread; the ineptitude of the European Union in procuring the vaccine; the reluctance of rich countries to share the vaccine with poor countries. At the same time, domestic political approaches probably best explain successes and failures: how authoritarian systems seemed to be better at mitigation than democracies; how bureaucratic politics among both national and local level officials sent mixed messages to populations; and how some national leaders accepted the reality and others turned a blind eye.

Check Your Understanding

What is the largest and most important international organization active in combating communicable diseases?
Doctors Without Borders

International Monetary Fund

European Union

World Health Organization

Glossary

noncommunicable diseases

diseases which are not directly transferred between individuals or groups, including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, respiratory illnesses

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THE IMPACT OF HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES ON THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Human security issues are of central importance, as they influence our approach to the study of international relations in critical ways. These transnational issues pose direct challenges to state sovereignty, setting off major debates about sovereignty’s place in future studies. In Chapter 2, we traced the roots of sovereignty to the Westphalian revolution: the development of the notion that states enjoy internal autonomy and cannot be subjected to an external authority. That principle—noninterference in the domestic affairs of other states—was embedded in the UN Charter. The human security issues we

focus on today—issues of communicable diseases, the environment, human rights, and migration—were considered to be sovereign state concerns, and interference by outside actors was unacceptable. After World War II, those norms began to change, a process that continues today. Once the exclusive hallmark of states, human security issues are increasingly susceptible to scrutiny by global actors, particularly when states' policies in these areas have an impact on others outside their borders. And when states cannot protect their own people from disease, violence, or environmental disasters, others might want to step in either for realist reasons (to protect their own) or for liberal reasons (to protect the "other").

Respect for traditional notions of state sovereignty pushes against this type of interference in other states' domestic affairs. Yet the call for such interventions is often strongly endorsed today. So what does this mean for our understanding of state sovereignty? Is it "eroding," as some theorists argue? Is it being "transformed" into something new? Or has sovereignty always been an ever-changing facet of international relations, as constructivists argue? Human security issues are at the heart of the challenges we face in trying to understand the place state sovereignty has in the international system today, and they will likely continue to problematize the concept for years to come.

Human security issues also raise questions about the future of globalization and multilateralism. Many transnational issues cannot be dealt with by individual states alone. Climate change cannot be fixed by one state, one state alone cannot contain a global pandemic like COVID-19, and migration invariably is affected by the policies of more than one state. In these cases, multilateral efforts are often necessary, and many scholars and policy makers see the benefits of such cooperative approaches. Yet in recent years, there has been a general backlash against globalization and multilateralism, with the goal of protecting individual state interests. We have seen a turn toward nationalism, protectionism, and unilateral action and a rejection of the institutions that embody multilateral approaches. This was the case in many states'

policy responses to COVID-19 and their denunciation of WHO, for example, but the backlash goes much further. The United States—once a leader of globalization—adopted protectionist trade policies in the mid-2010s, rejecting the multilateral principles of the World Trade Organization and arguing that globalized free trade hurts U.S. workers. It also withdrew from key international institutions such as UNESCO and the UN Human Rights Council as well as from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and even the Paris climate change agreement, a decision that was reversed by the Biden administration. Hungary has rejected a ruling by the European Court of Justice, continuing to refuse entry to asylum seekers; China has ignored a ruling by an international arbitration court and continues its aggressive, unilateral actions in the South China Sea; and the United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union. What does all this mean for the future of globalization? Is the commitment to multilateralism coming to an end, or are these unilateral approaches just a blip in the overall trend of globalization? The debate is likely to continue for years to come.

Finally, human security issues also pose challenges for the theoretical frameworks introduced at the beginning of this book. The radical perspective elaborated in Chapter 8 appears to some more relevant than ever. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic hardships on marginalized communities as well as the insecurities propelling high levels of migration remind us of global inequities. To radicals, these human security inequities stem from the flaws of global capitalism and the international liberal economic order where unsustainable economic growth overrides human welfare.32

Adherents of the traditional frameworks have also been forced to rethink key assumptions and values, as well as the discourse of their theoretical perspective, to accommodate the ways that transnational issues of human rights, migration, the environment, and health influence the world today.

The very core propositions of realist theory—the primacy of the state, the clear separation between domestic and international politics, and the emphasis on state security—are

made problematic. Issues of health and disease, the environment, human rights, and migration, along with others such as drug and human trafficking and transnational crime, are problems that no single state can effectively address alone. These issues have broken down the divide between the international and the domestic. Although they may threaten state security, they have no traditional military solution, even for a great power or superpower.

Realists have generally adopted a nuanced argument consonant with realist precepts to address these issues. Although most realists admit that other actors have gained power relative to the state, they contend that state primacy is not in jeopardy. Competitive centers of power at the local, transnational, or international level do not necessarily or automatically lead to the erosion or elimination of state power. Most significantly, the fundamentals of state security are no less important today than they were in the past. What has changed is that the decreasing salience of interstate and nuclear war as challenges to state and interstate security has forced a broadening of security discourse to encompass numerous aspects of human security. For humans to be secure, not only must state security be ensured, but economic security, environmental security, human rights security, and health and well-being must be secured as well. One form of security does not replace another; each augments the rest. Thus, although these issues have forced realists to add qualifications to their approach, they have preserved it and enhanced its theoretical usefulness.

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IN FOCUS

Human Security: Impact on Study of International Relations

On core concepts:

Sovereignty: human security challenges traditional idea that issues of the environment, migration, and health are solely concerns of sovereign states; protection of individuals may require others to intervene.

Globalization and Multilateralism: globalization has unintended consequences and multilateralism may not respond adequately; see rise of nationalism, protectionism, and unilateral action.

On theoretical perspectives:

Radical perspective: human security issues adversely affect marginalized populations disproportionately; inequities flow from global capitalism and the liberal international economic order.

Realism: primacy of state, separation between domestic and international, emphasis on state security are problematic; there is need for a broadened view of security to include economic, environmental, and health concerns for individuals.

Liberalism: consistent with view of importance of individuals and institutions; though cooperation may be preferable, it is not always possible.

Constructivism: there is changing discourse in discussions of health, the environment, and human rights; material factors, ideas, and norms shape debates over issues.

*

Transnational human security issues, and the way they are often confronted today, are consistent with liberals' belief in the importance of individuals and institutions. IGOs and individuals working through NGOs play a central role in international policy approaches to human rights, the environment, migration, and health. And it is liberals who introduced the notion that many other issues may be just as important as physical security. Human security issues thus have a key place in liberal thinking. Yet the recent backlash against globalization and multilateral approaches, and the difficulties states have faced in cooperating on issues of health, migration, and the environment and even in coordinating to intervene to protect human rights where they are threatened, poses a challenge for liberals. While cooperation might be preferable, it is not always possible, and even if it is not very effective, states often try to deal with transnational issues unilaterally. While the scope of the liberal perspective

therefore fits human security issues well, the way these issues are being dealt with in the international system today presents some challenges for liberal arguments.

Constructivists have presented a different approach for analyzing transnational human security issues. They have alerted us to the nuances of the changing discourse embedded in discussions of health, the environment, and human rights. They have illustrated how both material factors and ideas shape debates over these issues. They have called attention to the importance of norms in influencing and changing individual and state behavior. More directly than other theorists, constructivists have begun to explore the varying impacts of these issues on the traditional concepts of the state, national identity, and sovereignty.

Check Your Understanding

What statement best describes the realism view on global health? International cooperation is vital as diseases do not respect national borders.

Global health is mostly important if it threatens a state's security.

The way we frame global issues can affect the desire of the world to cooperate in solving them.

Human security issues adversely affect marginalized populations.

Endnotes

Note 32: See, for example, Benny Teh Cheng Guan, "The COVID-19 Pandemic: Debates and Opportunities for Human Security Research," in "Forum: COVID-19 and IR Scholarship: One Profession, Many Voices," International Studies Review, March 8, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab004 (accessed 3/27/21). Return to reference 32

IN SUM: CHANGING YOUR WORLD

In these 12 chapters, we have explored the historical development of international relations, from the development of the state system to notions of an international system and

international community. We have introduced different perspectives—realism, liberalism, and constructivism—that help us organize our ideas about the role of the international system, the state, the individual, and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in international relations. From these perspectives, we have examined the major issues of the day and analyzed how these issues affect conflict, cooperation, sovereignty, and even the study of international politics itself.

A citizenry able to articulate these arguments is better able to explain the whys and hows of events that affect our lives. A citizen who can understand these events is better able to make and support informed policy choices. In the transnational era of the twenty-first century, as economic, political, social, and environmental forces both above the state and within the state assume greater salience, the role of individuals becomes all the more demanding—and all the more important.

Discussion Questions

How do human security issues force us to rethink international relations?

Why is migration both a human rights issue and a humanitarian issue?

Find two news articles that explain how receiving states are addressing the influx of new migrants.

International cooperation on health has traditionally been viewed as a functionalist issue, but increasingly the issue has been politicized. What has changed? With what effect?

To what extent has COVID-19 forced us to rethink issues of state power and international responsibility?

Key Terms

demographic transition (p. 428) human security (p. 427) internally displaced people (IDPs) (p. 434) Malthusian dilemma (p. 428) noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) (p. 444) non-refoulement (p. 433) refugees (p. 433)

Glossary

demographic transition

the situation in which increasing levels of economic development lead to falling death rates, followed by falling birth rates

human security

a broadened concept of security to include the protection of individuals from systematic violence, environmental degradation, and health disasters

internally displaced people (IDPs)

individuals who are uprooted from their homes, often due to civil strife, but remain in their home country

Malthusian dilemma

the scenario in which population growth rates will increase faster than agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages; named after Thomas Malthus

noncommunicable diseases

diseases which are not directly transferred between individuals or groups, including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, respiratory illnesses

non-refoulement

principle that refugees cannot be forced to return to their country of origin because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group

refugees

individuals who flee from their country of nationality because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group

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GLOSSARY

adaptation shifting resources into preparing for and remediating effects of climate change (Ch. 11)

anarchy the fact that there exists no hierarchically superior, coercive authority that can create laws, resolve disputes, or enforce law and order in the system (Ch. 3) arms control regulating arms research, manufacturing, deployment, and proliferation of weapons systems (Ch. 6)

asymmetric conflict conflict between a more powerful party and significantly weaker party (Ch. 6)

balance of payments a country’s current and capital account balances; may be positive (surplus) or negative (deficit) (Ch. 8)

balance of power any system in which actors (e.g., states) enjoy relatively equal power, such that no single state or coalition of states is able to dominate other actors in the system (Ch. 2) balancing taking actions to offset the power of more powerful states (Ch. 3)

bandwagoning a process in which states that might have opposed a threatening state choose to ally with it instead (Ch. 3)

behavioralism an approach to the study of social science and international relations that posits that individuals and units like states act in regularized ways; leads to a belief that behaviors can be described, explained, and predicted (Ch. 1) Beijing Consensus an alternative to economic liberalism;

experimenting with policies in state capitalism, with the government playing an active role in picking economic winners and losers (Ch. 8) belief system the organized and integrated perceptions of individuals that form a relatively integrated set of images (Ch. 4)

bipolar the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in two states or coalitions of states (Ch. 4)

BRICS an informal group of emerging economic powers, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Ch. 8)

bureaucratic politics model the model of foreign policy decision making that posits that national decisions are the outcomes of bargaining among bureaucratic groups having competing interests; decisions reflect the relative strength of the individual bureaucratic players or of the organizations they represent (Ch. 5) caliphate the notion that the Muslim world must have a caliph, a spiritual leader of Islam, heading the community (Ch. 2)

capital accounts measure of the flows of capital between countries, including foreign direct investment and portfolio investment in and out (Ch. 8)

capitalism the economic system in which the ownership of the means of production is in private hands; the system operates according to market forces whereby capital and labor move freely (Ch. 2) cognitive consistency the tendency to accept information that is compatible with what has previously been accepted, often ignoring inconsistent information (Ch. 4) Cold War the era in international relations between the end of World War II and 1990, distinguished by ideological, economic, political, and military rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States (Ch. 2) collective good a public good that is available to all regardless of individual contribution—e.g., the air, the oceans, or Antarctica—that no one owns or is individually responsible for (Ch. 9) collective security the idea that aggression by a state should be defeated collectively because aggression against one state is aggression against all (Ch. 3) colonialism the practice of founding, maintaining, and expanding a state’s reach to territory abroad, motivated by

expectation of economic gain, political agreement, or cultural supremacy (Ch. 2) commercial peace theory a theory that states that are interdependent through trade and investment are less likely to go to war; conflict is too economically costly (Ch. 6) comparative advantage the ability of a country to make and export a good relatively more efficiently than other countries; the basis for the liberal economic principle that countries benefit from free trade among nations (Ch. 8) compellence the use of threats to coerce another into taking an action it otherwise would not take (Ch. 5)

complex interdependence states are connected through multiple channels (both formal and informal), there is no hierarchy of issues, and the result is a decline in the use of military force (Ch. 3)

complex (or multidimensional) peacekeeping multidimensional operations using military and civilian personnel, often including traditional peacekeeping and nation-building activities; more dangerous because not all parties have consented and because force is usually used (Ch. 9) constructivism an international relations theory that hypothesizes how ideas, norms, and institutions shape state identity and interests (Ch. 3)

containment a foreign policy designed to prevent the expansion of an adversary by blocking its opportunities to expand through foreign aid programs or through use of coercive force; the major U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era (Ch. 2) conventional wars regular armies openly engaged in combat with the objective to win control of the state by defeating the enemy's military force on the battlefield (Ch. 6) credibility the quality of having both the ability and incentive to act using a certain policy such that other states believe it will be carried out (Ch. 5) crimes against humanity international crimes, including murder, enslavement, ethnic cleansing, and torture, committed against civilians, as codified in the Rome Statute (Ch. 10) cultural relativism the belief that human rights, ethics, and morality are determined by cultures and history and therefore are not universally the same (Ch. 10) current accounts measure of net border flows

between countries of goods, services, governmental transfers, and capital investments (Ch. 8)

cyberspace the entire spectrum of networked information and communication systems and devices (Ch. 6)

cyberwarfare state actions taken to penetrate another state's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption (Ch. 6)

democratic peace theory theory supported by empirical evidence that democratic states do not fight wars against each other, but do fight wars against authoritarian states (Ch. 6) demographic transition the situation in which increasing levels of economic development lead to falling death rates, followed by falling birth rates (Ch. 12) dependency theory a strand of the radical school of economic thought that seeks to explain the underdevelopment of dominated states (Ch. 3)

derivatives financial instruments often derived from an asset (mortgages, loans, foreign exchange, interest rates) which parties agree to exchange over time; a way of buying and selling risk in international financial markets (Ch. 8) détente the easing of tense relations; in the context of this volume, détente refers to the relaxation and reappraisal of threat assessments by political rivals, for example, the United States and Soviet Union during the later years of the Cold War (Ch. 2)

deterrence the policy of maintaining a large military force and arsenal to discourage any potential aggressor from taking action (Ch. 5)

diplomacy the practice of states trying to influence the behavior of other states by bargaining, negotiating, taking specific noncoercive actions or refraining from such actions, or appealing to the foreign public for support of a position (Ch. 5) disarmament reducing the amount of arms and the types of weapons employed by a state (Ch. 6)

discourse how we choose to talk about ourselves and others (Ch. 3)

domino effect a metaphor that posits that the loss of influence over one state to an adversary will necessarily lead to a subsequent loss of control over neighboring states, just as dominos fall one after another (Ch. 2) economic interdependence states mutually rely on one another for goods and/or economic gain (Ch. 7)

economic liberalism ideas based on Adam Smith that when individuals pursue their own self-interest, efficiency for everyone is achieved; markets function best when governments interfere the least (Ch. 8) economic nationalism modern version of core mercantilist ideas that economic policies should be subservient to the national interest (Ch. 8)

economic radicalism beliefs drawn from Marxist and neo-Marxist writing that poor labor conditions, colonial expansion, and divisions between the rich and poor are blamed on international capitalism (Ch. 8) engagement getting a target state to act in a desired way by rewarding the moves it makes in the desired direction; often referred to as positive sanctions (Ch. 5) epistemic community community of experts and technical specialists who share a set of beliefs and a way to approach problems (Ch. 11)

ethnonational movements the participation in organized political activity of self-conscious communities sharing an ethnic affiliation; some movements seek autonomy within an organized state; others desire separation and the formation of a new state; still others want to join with a different state (Ch. 5) European Union (EU) a union of twenty-eight European states, formerly the European Economic Community; designed originally during the 1950s for economic integration, but since expanded into a closer political and economic union (Ch. 9) evoked set details from a present situation that are similar to information gleaned from past situations (Ch. 4)

exchange rates the price of one currency in relation to another; rates may float with the market or be fixed by governments (Ch. 8)

external balancing allying with other states to offset the power of more powerful states (Ch. 3)

extradition the process of delivering an individual from the territory of one state to another state for prosecution or to serve a sentence (Ch. 7)

extremist Islamic fundamentalism groups seeking to change states and societies through violent and coercive means to support imposition of Sharia law (Ch. 5) fiscal policies policies affecting a government's budget, namely level of government spending and tax rates (Ch. 8)

foreign direct investment (FDI) investing in a state, usually by multinational corporations, by establishing a manufacturing facility or financing investments in extractive industries or transportation (Ch. 8) fragile state state which has ineffective or nonexistent government, widespread lawlessness, often accompanied by insurgency and crime; situation where state authorities are not protecting their own people (Ch. 5) General Assembly one of the major organs of the United Nations; generally addresses issues other than those of peace and security; each member state has one vote; operates with six functional committees composed of all member states (Ch. 9) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) founded by treaty in 1947 as the Bretton Woods institution responsible for negotiating a liberal international trade regime that included the principles of nondiscrimination in trade and most-favored-nation status; reformed as the World Trade Organization in 1995 (Ch. 8) genocide the systematic killing or harming of a group of people based on national, religious, ethnic, or racial characteristics, with the intention of destroying the group (Ch. 10) geoengineering large-scale manipulations of the physical, chemical, or biological systems to reduce the levels of atmospheric gases (Ch. 11)

Global North the developed countries, mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, including the countries in North America, Europe, Japan and South Korea (Ch. 8)

Global South the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, and Southern Asia (Ch. 8)

globalization the process of increasing integration of the world in terms of economics, politics, communications, social relations, and culture; increasingly undermines traditional state

sovereignty (Ch. 1) Group of 7 (G7) group of the traditional economic powers (U.S., Great Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, Canada) who meet annually to address economic problems; when Russia joins, the G8 discussions turn to political issues (Ch. 8)

Group of 77 a coalition of about 125 developing countries that press for reforms in economic relations between developing and developed countries; also referred to as the South (Ch. 9) groupthink a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action (Ch. 4) guerrilla warfare the use of irregular armed forces to undermine the will of an incumbent government (or its foreign support) by selectively attacking the government's vulnerable points or personnel over a prolonged period of time; often used by weaker power (Ch. 6) hard power states using various sources of power (economic or military) to coerce other states into adopting actions in its interests (Ch. 5)

Heckscher-Ohlin theory theory that a country will export goods that makes intensive use of the factors of production in which it is well-endowed (Ch. 8)

hegemon a dominant state that has a preponderance of power; often establishes and enforces the rules and norms in the international system (Chs. 2, 4)

horizontal enforcement a process whereby states work to elicit compliance with international law by other states (Ch. 7)

humanitarian intervention actions by states, international organizations, or the international community in general to intervene, usually with coercive force, to alleviate human suffering without necessarily obtaining consent of the state (Ch. 10) human security a broadened concept of security to include the protection of individuals from systematic violence, environmental degradation, and health disasters (Ch. 12) hypotheses specific falsifiable statements that question the proposed relationship among two or more concepts (Ch. 3)

identity a sense of self based on certain qualities and beliefs that define a person or group (Ch. 3)

imperialism the policy and practice of extending the domination of one state over another through territorial conquest or economic domination (Ch. 2)

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) international agencies or bodies established by states and controlled by member states that deal with areas of common interest (Ch. 9) internal balancing a state building up its own military resources and capabilities in order to be able to stand against more powerful states (Ch. 3)

internally displaced people (IDPs) individuals who are uprooted from their homes, often due to civil strife, but remain in their home country (Ch. 12)

International Bill of Rights the collective name for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Ch. 10) international cooperation when states adopt behavior that is consistent with the preferences of other states in order to achieve common objectives (Ch. 7)

international humanitarian law a body of law comprised of the four Geneva Conventions and protocols protecting individuals during war, including wounded military, prisoners of war, and civilians (Ch. 10) international institutions sets of rules such as international treaties and organizations meant to govern international behavior (Ch. 3)

international law a body of rules and norms regulating interactions among states, between states and IGOs, and among IGOs, states, and individuals (Ch. 7)

International Monetary Fund (IMF) the Bretton Woods institution originally charged with helping states deal with temporary balance-of-payments problems; now plays a broader role in assisting debtor developing states by offering loans to those who institute specific policies or structural adjustment programs (Ch. 8) international relations the study of the interactions among various actors (states, international

organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and subnational entities like bureaucracies, local governments, and individuals) that participate in international politics (Ch. 1) interstate wars wars between states (Ch. 6)

intrastate wars wars that take place within a state (also known as civil wars) (Ch. 6)

jus ad bellum laws that deal with when it is just/legal to go to war (Ch. 6)

jus in bello laws that define what acts are considered legal and illegal when fighting a war (Ch. 6)

just war tradition the idea that wars must be judged according to two categories of justice: (1) jus ad bellum, or the justness of war itself; and (2) jus in bello, or the justness of each actor's conduct in war (Ch. 6) League of Nations the international organization formed at the conclusion of World War I for the purpose of preventing another war; based on collective security (Ch. 2) legitimacy the moral and legal right to rule, which is based on law, custom, heredity, or the consent of the governed (Ch. 2)

legitimate being supported logically and justifiably (Ch. 7)

levels of analysis analytical framework based on the ideas that events in international relations can be explained by looking at individuals, states, or the international system and that causes at each level can be separated from causes at other levels (Ch. 4)

liberalism the theoretical perspective based on the assumption of the innate goodness of the individual and the value of political institutions in promoting social progress (Ch. 3) macroeconomic policies government policies designed to address macroeconomic conditions, including fiscal and monetary policies (Ch. 8)

Malthusian dilemma the scenario in which population growth rates will increase faster than agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages; named after Thomas Malthus (Ch. 12) mercantilism economic theory that international commerce should increase a state's wealth, especially gold; state power is

enhanced by a favorable balance of trade (Ch. 8) microeconomic policies government policies adopted to affect regulations, subsidies, competitiveness, and antitrust actions (Ch. 8)

mirror images seeing in one's opponent the opposite of characteristics seen in oneself (Ch. 4)

mitigation policies designed to reduce greenhouse emissions (Ch. 11)

monetary policy policies affecting national interest rates or exchange rates designed to affect employment and inflation rates (Ch. 8)

moral hazard problem when states or individuals are not made to pay the consequences of reckless behavior; they have little incentive to change that behavior (Ch. 8) most-favored-nation (MFN) principle principle in international trade agreements when one state promises to give another state the same treatment in trade as the first state gives to its most-favored trading partner (Ch. 8) multilateralism the conduct of international activity by three or more states in accord with shared general principles, often, but not always, through international institutions (Ch. 4) multinational corporations (MNCs) private enterprises which span state borders through the actual presence in, investments in, or trade with other countries (Ch. 3) multipolar the distribution of the power to conquer is concentrated in more than two states (Ch. 4)

nation a group of people sharing a common language, history, or culture (Ch. 4)

national interest the interest of the state, most basically the protection of territory and sovereignty; in realist thinking, the interest is a unitary one defined in terms of the pursuit of power; in liberal thinking, there are many national interests; in radical thinking, it is the interest of a ruling elite (Ch. 3) national security the ability of a state to protect its interests, secrets, and citizens from threats (both external and internal) that endanger them (Ch. 6)

nationalism a sense of national consciousness where people identify with a common history, language, or customs, often

placing primary emphasis on one's own nation's culture and interests over those of other nations (Ch. 2) nation-state the entity formed when people sharing the same historical, cultural, or linguistic roots form their own state with borders, a government, and international recognition; trend began with French and American Revolutions (Ch. 4) negative externalities term for costly (harmful) unintended consequences of exchange (Ch. 11)

neoliberal institutionalism a reinterpretation of liberalism that posits that even in an anarchic international system, states will cooperate because of their continuous interactions with each other and because it is in their self-interest to do so; institutions provide the framework for cooperative interactions (Ch. 3) neorealism a reinterpretation of realism that posits that the structure of the international system is the most important level to study; states behave the way they do because of the structure of the international system; includes the belief that general laws can be found to explain events (Ch. 3) noncombatant immunity a core principle of international humanitarian law (formerly, "the laws of war") that holds that people not bearing arms in a conflict may not be deliberately targeted or systematically harmed; this category includes unarmed civilians, soldiers who have surrendered, and soldiers who are too severely injured to defend themselves (Ch. 6) noncommunicable diseases diseases which are not directly transferred between individuals or groups, including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, respiratory illnesses (Ch. 12) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) private associations of individuals or groups that engage in political, economic, or social activities, usually across national borders (Ch. 9) non-refoulement principle that refugees cannot be forced to return to their country of origin because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group (Ch. 12) nontariff barriers restrictions on international trade other than tariffs, including quantitative restrictions and quotas; designed to protect health, safety, national security, or competitiveness (Ch. 8) nonviolent resistance resistance to established authority that systematically precludes the use of violence as a tactic; common examples include strikes, sit-ins, and protest marches (Ch. 6)

normative relating to ethical rules; in foreign policy and international affairs, standards suggesting what a policy should be (Ch. 1)

norms collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity (Ch. 3)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military and political alliance between Western European states and the United States established in 1948 for the purpose of defending Europe from aggression by the Soviet Union and its allies; post–Cold War expansion to Eastern Europe (Ch. 2) nuclear proliferation the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and technology related to nuclear weapons and information to states not recognized under the Treaty on the NonProliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Ch. 6) offshore financial centers states or jurisdictions with few regulations on banking and financial transactions, often with low taxation; used by individuals and international banks to transfer funds (Ch. 8) organizational process model the foreign policy decision-making model that posits that national decisions are the products of subnational governmental organizations and units which follow the standard operating procedures and processes of the organizations (Ch. 5) peacebuilding post-conflict political and economic activities designed to preserve and strengthen peace settlements; includes civil administration, elections, and economic development activities (Ch. 9) pluralist model a model of foreign policy making that focuses on the role that societal groups play in influencing national decisions (Ch. 5)

populism belief that champions the common person, contrasting people's concerns with those of the elite; often opposing big business and financial interests (Ch. 2) portfolio investment private investment in another state by purchasing stocks or bonds, without taking direct control of the investments (Ch. 8)

power the ability not only to influence others but also to control outcomes so as to produce results that would not have occurred naturally (Ch. 5)

power potential a measure of the power an entity like a state could have, derived from a consideration of both its tangible and its intangible resources; states may not always be able to transfer their power potential into actual power (Ch. 5) prisoner's dilemma a theoretical game in which rational players (states or individuals) choose options that lead to outcomes (payoffs) such that all players are worse off than under a different set of choices (Ch. 7) protectionism state policies imposing barriers to restrict imports for a variety of reasons (Ch. 8)

public diplomacy use of certain diplomatic methods to create a favorable image of the state or its people in the eyes of other states and their publics; methods include, for example, goodwill tours, cultural and student exchanges, and media presentations (Ch. 5) radicalism a social theory, formulated by Karl Marx and modified by other theorists, that posits that class conflict between owners and workers will cause the eventual demise of capitalism; offers a critique of capitalism (Ch. 3) rational actors actors that make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of various options against the goal to be achieved (Ch. 3)

realism a theory of international relations that emphasizes states' interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world; based on the notion that individuals are power seeking and that states act in pursuit of their own national interest defined in terms of power (Ch. 3) refugees individuals who flee from their country of nationality because of fear of persecution on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or membership in a social group (Ch. 12) relative gains how much more one state gains over another (Ch. 3)

responsibility to protect (R2P) emerging norm that the international community should help individuals suffering at the hands of their own state or others when the home state fails to provide security (Ch. 10) rollback a strategy of using, or threatening the use of, armed force to aggressively coerce an adversary into abandoning occupied territory (Ch. 2)

sanctions economic, diplomatic, and even coercive military force used to enforce an international policy or another state's

policy; sanctions can be positive (offering an incentive to a state) or negative (punishing a state) (Ch. 5) satisficing in decision-making theory, the tendency of states and their leaders to settle for the minimally acceptable solution, not the best possible outcome, in order to reach a consensus and formulate a policy (Ch. 5) Security Council one of the major organs of the United Nations charged with the responsibility for peace and security issues; includes five permanent members with veto power and ten nonpermanent members chosen from the General Assembly (Ch. 9) security dilemma the situation in which each state tries to increase its own power to protect itself, but this increased power is seen as a threat by other states, leading them to be more insecure and thus to seek to increase their own power which, in turn, makes others more insecure (Ch. 3) shadow of the future states' expectations about how long they will continue to interact in the future (Ch. 7)

smart power using a combination of the hard power of coercion with the soft power of persuasion and attraction (Ch. 5)

smart sanctions limited sanctions targeted to hurt or support specific groups; used to avoid the humanitarian costs of general sanctions (Ch. 5)

socialism an economic and social system that relies on intensive government intervention or public ownership of the means of production in order to distribute wealth among the population more equitably; in radical Marxist theory, the stage between capitalism and communism (Ch. 2) socialization the process through which one adopts the identities of other groups (Ch. 3)

soft law nonbinding norms of state behavior; may or may not eventually become hard or obligatory law (Ch. 11)

soft power the power to attract states to change their behavior rather than having to coerce them into doing so; power is based on the legitimacy of the state's values or its policies (Ch. 5) sovereignty the authority of the state, based on recognition by other states and by nonstate actors, to govern matters within its own borders that affect its people, economy, security, and

form of government (Ch. 2) sovereign wealth funds state-controlled investment companies that manage large foreign exchange reserves in capital surplus countries like China or in petroleum-exporting countries (Norway, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia) (Ch. 8) state an organized political unit that has a geographic territory, a stable population, and a government to which the population owes allegiance and that is legally recognized by other states (Chs. 4, 5) statecraft techniques states use to exert influence and project power including diplomacy, economic, and use of force tools (Ch. 5)

structural adjustment programs IMF policies and recommendations aimed to guide states out of balance-of-payment difficulties and economic crises, consistent with the Washington Consensus (Ch. 8) summits talks and meetings among the highest-level government officials from different countries (Ch. 2)

superpowers highest-power states as distinguished from other great powers; term coined during the Cold War to refer to the United States and the Soviet Union (Ch. 2) sustainable development an approach to economic development that tries to reconcile current economic growth and environmental protection with the needs of future generations (Ch. 8)

system an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction in which a change in one unit causes changes in the others (Ch. 4) tariffs tax imposed on imports which raises the price of the good, designed to protect domestic producers from competition by foreign producers (Ch. 8)

terrorism an act that is political in nature or intent committed by nonstate actors that targets noncombatants (a form of asymmetric conflict) (Ch. 6)

theory a collection of propositions that combine to explain phenomena by specifying the relationships among a set of concepts (Ch. 3)

theoretical perspectives sets of theories united by some common themes such as actors, concepts, and issues (Ch. 3)

Third Reich the German state from 1933–45; a time which coincides with the rule of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Workers Party, or “Nazis” (Ch. 2) Track One Diplomacy negotiations among government officials taken on behalf of governments (Ch. 5)

Track Two Diplomacy unofficial overtures by private individuals or groups from outside governments to try and resolve an ongoing international crisis or civil war (Ch. 5) traditional peacekeeping the use of multilateral third-party military forces to achieve several different objectives: containing interstate conflict; enforcing ceasefires and separating military forces; used during the Cold War to prevent conflict among the great powers from escalating (Ch. 9) transaction costs the costs of making an exchange (Ch. 7)

transnational movements groups of people from different states who share religious, ideological, or policy beliefs and who work together to change the status quo (Ch. 5) treaties are explicitly written agreements among states that lay out rights and obligations (sometimes labeled conventions, covenants, or protocols) (Ch. 7) Treaties of Westphalia treaties ending the Thirty Years War in Europe in 1648; in international relations represents the beginning of state sovereignty within a territorial space (Ch. 2) unconventional wars wars distinguished by willingness to flout restrictions on legitimate targets of violence or refuse to accept the traditional outcomes of battles as an indicator of victory or defeat (Ch. 6) unipolar the power to conquer all other states in the system combined resides within a single state (Ch. 4)

universal jurisdiction states may claim jurisdiction over an individual in another state if that individual’s conduct is sufficiently heinous to violate the laws of all states (Ch. 7)

vertical enforcement a legal process whereby one actor works to constrain the actions of another actor over which it has authority in order to secure its compliance with the law (Ch. 7) war an organized and deliberate political act by an established political authority that causes 1,000 or more deaths in a 12-month period and involves at least two actors capable of harming each other (Ch. 6) war on terror declaring to use a

given society's material and nonmaterial resources to defeat those using terror, often nonstate actors targeting noncombatants to instill fear in the population (Ch. 2) Warsaw Pact the military alliance formed by the states of the Soviet bloc in 1955 in response to the rearmament of West Germany and its inclusion in NATO; permitted the stationing of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe (Ch. 2) Washington Consensus a version of economic liberalism that holds that through specific liberal economic policies, privatization, government deregulation, and trade liberalization, can economic development occur (Ch. 8) weapons of mass destruction (WMD) nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons which can kill or bring major harm to large numbers of people or structures (Ch. 2) World Bank a global lending agency focused on financing projects in developing countries; formally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, established as one of the key Bretton Woods institutions to deal with reconstruction and development after World War II (Ch. 8) World Trade Organization (WTO) intergovernmental organization designed to support the principles of liberal free trade; includes enforcement measures and dispute settlement mechanisms; established in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Ch. 8)

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